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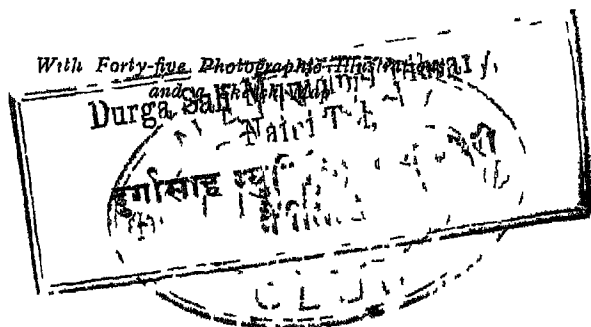
# THE LAMPI

*A Story about some Gunners*

BY

Lieut. Colonel G. P. CHAPMAN

D S O, M C, R A



1944

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TO  
THE OFFICERS AND MEN  
of  
82 Anti-Tank Regiment, R.A.  
who built the  
Road  
and to those of the Regiment  
who necessarily had to stay  
with the Guns, and so could  
not help as they would have  
wished  
This Book  
is dedicated, gratefully.

NUNGBA,  
*September, 1942.*



"WE WERE THEN LYING AT NICHUGUARD"

## PROLOGUE.

It was early in June that I first took a dislike to the Khopum Valley. Looking at the map, it lay there squat and ugly, right on the Divisional flank, yet lost in the mountains, a silent menace to our security, an obvious place for a quick concentration by the enemy. We were then lying at Nichuguard—8 miles from that home of all malaria, Dimapur, otherwise known as Manipur Road Station.

Why I disliked it so much I don't know. It gave me a feeling of insecurity—of something springing out of the dark—something obscene—something unhealthy: and I made up my mind to ask the General to let me go with a few men to ventilate it. I wanted to see it, and deal with it, and if necessary garrison it, so that its quiet, silent, certain threat could be dissolved by the healthy laugh and talk of British Soldiers. How the General agreed and how it all happened is the subject of this book.

It did happen, and very quickly: the Khopum Valley today echoes the noise of passing motors. Purists may call it desecration of wild places. Economists say it is promising.

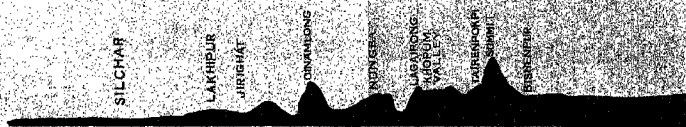
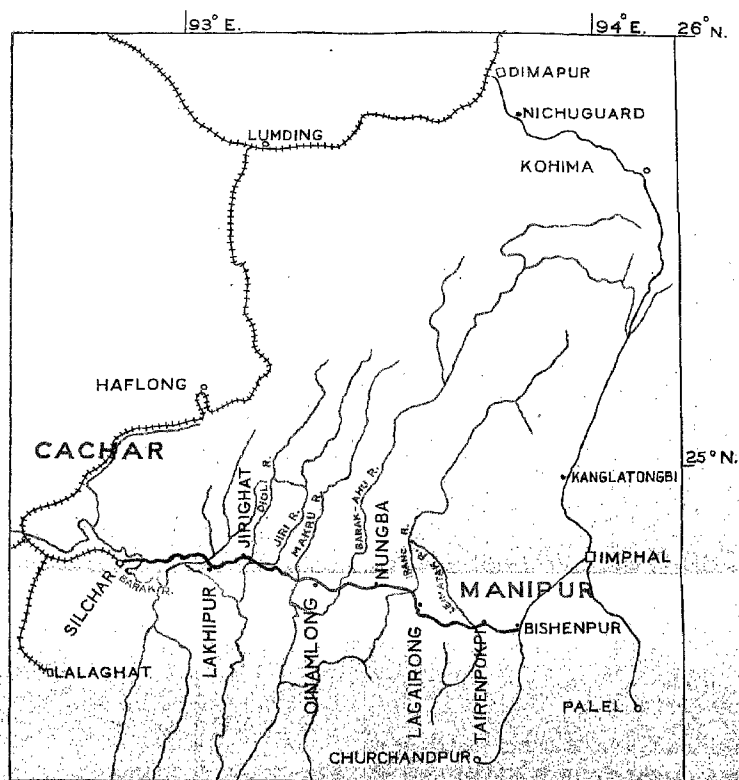
Soldiers call it making good the flanks, and I call it still further proof of what the Royal Regiment can do.

And the Nagas? What they call it I don't know, except the "Lampi". They are funny little men, but after all they did build the Road.

NUNGBA.

*September, 1942.*

# MAP OF 'LAMPI' AREA



SECTION OF ROAD



SCALE 1" = 15.8 MILES



## FOREWORD.

*By*

MAJOR GENERAL R. A. SAVORY, D.S.O., M.C.

The Officers and Men of CHAPFORCE have carried out their task by sheer determination and energy. The road which they have made is already being used; and will, in time, become of great importance.

The cost has been Rs. 1,000/- per mile which, in comparison with other roads of its type, is cheap. This has been due in large measure to the supervision by British Ranks of Naga labour: a task done with that ideal blend of firmness, cheerfulness and humour for which the British soldier is renowned.

They have indeed given an added meaning to the motto of the Royal Regiment—'UBIQUE.'

Imphal,  
15 October, 1942.

R. A. SAVORY,  
*Major General.*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The publication of this book has been delayed, necessarily, as much of the information and the illustrations would have been of considerable value to the enemy.

CALCUTTA  
*April, 1944.*

## CONTENTS.

	<i>Page</i>
PROLOGUE ... ..	v
FOREWORD ... ..	vii
AUTHOR'S NOTE ... ..	viii
CHAPTER I ... ..	1
CHAPTER II ... ..	5
CHAPTER III ... ..	11
CHAPTER IV ... ..	20
CHAPTER V ... ..	27
CHAPTER VI ... ..	34
CHAPTER VII ... ..	47
CHAPTER VIII ... ..	64
CHAPTER IX ... ..	73
EPILOGUE ... ..	78
GLOSSARY ... ..	79
THE MEN WHO HELPED TO BUILD THE ROAD	
I. Officers and Men Who Actually Worked on the Road ... ..	80
II. Officers and Men Engaged in Administrative Work for the Road	81
JEEP DRIVERS . ... ..	82
BRIDGING PARTY ... ..	82
APPENDIX A ... ..	83
APPENDIX B ... ..	85



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	<i>To Face</i> <i>Page</i>
1. We Were then Lying at Nichuguard	... v
2. The Map of the Lampi ..	... vii
3. A Bridle Path Goes Meandering ..	... 5
4. Our First View of the Khopum Valley	... 8
5. That Horrible Nightmare Botha's Slide	... 14
6. The Road was Through and Perfectly Safe	... 15
7. The Suspension Bridge had Collapsed	... 17
8. Nagas are Funny Little People but They Did Build the Road	... 20
9. They are Cheerful and Happy	... 21
10. A Gentleman of Standing	... 21
11. Chapangs	... 22
12. I Had to Have It Taken Indoors	... 25
13. View South from M.S. 36	... 26
14. They Pushed Off into the Rising Jungle	... 27
15. Lousie Lizzie—Cathedral Steps	... 28
16. We Took Her	... 30
17. And Shook Her	... 30
18. Sorted out the Bits	... 30
19. Put Them Together	... 30
20. Lifted Her Face	... 30
21. And Now She is a Placid Matronly Person	... 31
22. The Khopum Valley	... 33
23. A Jeep Track's a Jeep Track	... 34
24. But a Road's a Road	... 35
25. The Jeeps Brought Every Pound of It	... 40
26. Range on Range . . .	... 42
27. —As Far as the Eye can See	... 43
28. Each Valley Has its River . . .	... 44
29. And Each River has its Suspension Bridge	... 45
30. Were Wedging the Jeep Across	... 50
31. "The Dry Season 'Bus Route' "	... 52

	<i>to Face</i>
	<i>Page</i>
32. "The Second Class Road" ... ..	53
33. The General Went to Laganong ... ..	57
34. I Took My Party Back to M.S. 36 .. ..	59
35. The First Hairpin Bend in a Discreet Bottom Gear ... ..	61
36. We Went Straight for the Khud ... ..	62
37. And She was Over ... ..	63
38. A Dreadfully Unhealthy Part ... ..	66
39. Climatic Conditions Were too Much ... ..	67
40. Dismal Things were Happening ... ..	70
41. The Eyrie Which is the Rest House in Nungba	73
42. The 'Sertifficaat' on Wood ... ..	74
43. Some of Our Cruder Engineering Jobs .. ..	76
44. —Made the C. R. E. Winca ... ..	77
45. The End of the Road ... ..	78

## CHAPTER I.

On 9th June I drove the 135 miles from Nichuguard to Div. H.Q. beyond Imphal to announce the arrival of the Regiment from Ranchi and to get my orders for its deployment. At that time the enemy appeared to have quietened down, and there were no reports of any movement except on the Chindwin River.

The General was in very good form, and after a full discussion I broached the subject of my obsession—the Khopum Valley. I pointed it out on the map, and asked to be allowed to reconnoitre it.

At this stage I learnt of the General's plan for using my Anti-Tank Regt. H.Q. and portions of other units as a light mobile force "to dominate and secure the Imphal Plain from fifth columnist and other subversive elements, and so hold it as the scene of the coming battle." Also I was ordered to send elements of my force to enter the surrounding mountains and get the general feel of the land. The force was to be named CHAPFORCE, and was to be supported by Anti-Tank Artillery, Armoured Carriers, Field Artillery if required, and other arms according to the demand of the moment.

I went back to Nichuguard delighted with life, and with the new role of the Regiment. I

## *THE LAMPI*

was full of plans and schemes to discuss with Ian Campbell, the 2nd-in-Command.

. . .

A day or two afterwards I sent Campbell forward to Imphal to select a suitable H.Q. and to make all preparations for the reception of the oncoming Regiment: a task done with his usual meticulous care for detail, so that when R.H.Q. arrived on 20th June they walked right in to as comfortable quarters as could be found in the town—or rather on the outskirts of the town.

. . .

The journey up of the Regiment was marked by an incident which was to have very considerable repercussions on its future activities. On 19th June the Dimapur—Manipur Road collapsed at Milestone 43, practically as the last of our vehicles went past, with the result that troops forward of this point were cut off from any but foot and 'phone contact with the outer world—a serious outlook indeed in the event of an action developing, and serious enough for the supplies situation even without a battle.

. . .

The Dimapur—Imphal Road is quite immature and a shifty thing at the best of times.

## *THE LAMPI*

It traverses the sides of mountains, ridges and saddles, ascending to some 6000 feet at one part, and always dangerous. The drop at one side or the other (the khud), at times, is simply colossal, and the whole distance of 135 miles is littered with smashed-up vehicles, some down hundreds of feet. And in those June days it was littered with bodies—the dead and dying of the refugees who swarmed by in thousands, and died of cholera, dysentery and exhaustion in hundreds. Every day more vehicles dived over the khud, and men and friends were killed or hurt.

Then the road started to collapse with monotonous regularity. First at one point, and then at another; down it went. The combination of torrential rains and heavy military traffic was its death knell. Despite the efforts of thousands and thousands of Nagas—the little men who were to become our great friends—down went the road again. It was closed for weeks at a time, then open for a few days, only to be closed again. Then a hill would tumble down on it, and it really closed for another week or so. This went on all June and July and August. The soldiers in the plain had reduced rations, and the animals practically none. Petrol began to give out, and the Division was virtually stationary.

But out of this chaos and potential disaster was born the great idea which developed to

## *THE LAMPI*

serve the Imphal Plain faithfully, and brought a vital line of communications—a line of life-blood to the cut-off Divisions—The Road from Imphal to Silchar.





'A BRIDGE PATH GOES MEANDERING'

## CHAPTER II.

Looking at the map, the observer will see some 18 miles south-west of Imphal a small village called Bishenpur, insignificant in itself but important in one respect. From it goes a bridle path meandering over mountains, across rivers, through jungles, up to dizzy heights, down to bamboo swamps: but ever moving westwards until, after some 85 miles, it runs into Jirighat which is about 28 miles from Silchar, a railhead.

. . . .

At a conference in Divisional H.Q. on 25th June, the General gave me permission to send a party along this bridle track to have a look at the Khopum Valley—my private dread—and then if possible to push on to Silchar to see if it was possible to have pack mule or even country cart contact with Silchar, and thus have some slight relief from the uncertainties and worries of having continually collapsing lines of communication behind us. It is of interest that just after the conference I had occasion to speak to B.G.S. Corps, who told me that a reconnaissance had already been made and it was not worth starting out on another one!

## THE LAMPI

But we did. And on the morning of 4th July we started off. Young Harold West, the liaison officer, led the party which consisted of himself with sixteen British soldiers, nine Indian soldiers and twenty-one mules. I attached myself to the party with no particular role other than to be with them until they got into the swing of things and, of course, to have a good look at the Khopum Valley.

With the party were also two Jeeps, friends we had not met before, but destined to enter our lives to the exclusion of everything else during the next few months.

. . . .

Jeeps are curious little things. Those we had were made by Mr. Henry Ford. They are described at 14 h.p., Four-Wheel Drive, Open Runabouts, but they are universally known as Jeeps or Mice. They are miraculous. They go anywhere, stand up to anything, require the minimum of attention, and, with their narrow track (4' 7") and short wheel base, they are manoeuvrable to a degree. Also, and most important, they will carry nearly half a ton or pull a field gun.

Well then, with Harold West went two borrowed Jeeps "just to help in the first stage with the baggage and so relieve the mules on the first climb of 3000 feet in 4 miles—and anyway to see how far they could get." Actually

## THE LAMPI

one of them got three miles and then fell over the Khud 180 feet down with Sergeants Greenfield and Marner in it. Both soldiers were thrown clear in successive bounces and, although bruised, were all right. Much kit was lost, but four days afterwards the Jeep was pulled up the 180 feet on to the track again. Our Light Aid Detachment of the Ordnance Corps (Sergeant Curtis commanding) were simply magnificent then, and always afterwards. We couldn't have managed without them.

The second Jeep actually got four miles before it stuck—and there it remained for a fortnight. And one mule passed out from exhaustion; the effect of no rations but grass for weeks.

. . .

It was a most inauspicious start, the march only lasting ten miles to Tairenpokpi, and there we stayed all next day to collect up kit left behind, men left behind, and generally to tighten up for the next stage.

. . .

On 6th July we started off again, making for the 40 milestone where there was reputed to be a Rest House, but which in fact had disappeared ten years before. I went on ahead with Sergeant Botha and, crossing the summit of the big hill at Milestone 38, saw the most beautiful

## THE LAMPI

of all sights, our first glimpse of the Khopum Valley. It wasn't horrible, or sinister, but a wonderful green plain set in the middle of enormous jungle hills—a huge emerald in purple and blue setting. Silent as the grave, a military threat certainly, but beautiful for all that.

That night we camped at milestone 43, the entrance to the Valley—at a place we named then and which has been so called ever since—Leech Camp. Every man of us was bitten at least once by the most vicious leeches, and the mules were literally pulled to bits from night to morning. What a morning! It had started to rain about 8 o'clock the night before, and by 2 A.M. the whole camp was washed away. I used my ground-sheet as a hammock between two trees, and by midnight was lying in a warm bath, the hammock having filled up. At 2 A.M. it collapsed with the weight, so I got up finally. We at once started to walk the five miles to the Rest House at Lagairong to get shelter, a fire to dry our clothes and blankets, and to prepare some hot food.

The whole party was dry and comfortable by 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and all slept from nightfall until first light next day.

. . .

The 8th of July we spent, discussing West's move forward, for at that point, having seen the valley, I was going back with the plan



OUR FIRST VIEW OF THE KHOFUM MOUNTAIN



## *THE LAMPI*

which I had started to dream about—confident and apprehensive in turn: the plan was no less than to build a road suitable for Jeeps from Bishenpur to Lagairong and—if West's party came back with good news about the rest of the road—even to strike right out and make the shocking bridle path into a highway to Silchar, and a lifeline for the soldiers confined in Imphal Plain.

. . .

And so it turned out. On my return I made a report and asked for "100 soldiers and I will make a Jeep track from Bishenpur to the Khopum Valley in four weeks, and through the Valley to Lagairong in another three weeks."

But a blow had fallen. Yet another Engineer's report had come in, condemning the track as "quite impracticable for turning into any sort of road", and it looked as though the project was doomed. But not with our General do such pessimistic reports hold good. He sent for me, got my reassurance that I could do it, and told me to get on with it. He couldn't spare any soldiers, but I could employ coolies and get a move on. Also he wished to see West's report as soon as it came in.

. . .

On 14th July I sent Young to Bishenpur and Rogers and Mossman to milestone 22 to

## THE LAMPI

recruit labour and establish a base. They actually started work on that day, but it was not until the 19th July that fifty coolies were employed, and the great effort had started. The Road—which was to dominate our lives, eating, sleeping or working. Which was to give us grievous disappointment and great happiness. Which was to bring out the best in officers and men, and shew up the worst. Which was to offer fatigue to the dropping point; to teach, to cause suffering, to expose the soldiers to heat and torrential rain, leeches, mosquitoes, fever and discomfort. And to provide wonderful happiness. 'The Road must go on, crescendo, crescendo, we must break through—never mind those rocks, never mind the landslide—dig it out—on—on. We must finish by 21st September because West's party says it's possible to get right through: I don't care if you are sick—the Road will still go on. Who is over the Khud? It doesn't matter a damn the Road will still go on.'

The Road first and last, the Road all the time: and on 17th September we smashed through to Jirighat.

The story of its happening is here.

### CHAPTER III.

I didn't get away from Imphal (which, by the way, is the alternative name for the town of Manipur) until the 28th July: there was so much to arrange and plan not only for the Road, but also for the other CHAPFORCE activities, and of course there were Regimental Duties necessary on arrival into a theatre of war.

The work had gone on however during the nine days from the start, and Mossman had somehow scrambled a track through to Milestone 23, right on the very summit of the big Bishenpur hill—5500 feet. It certainly wasn't a road and hardly a Jeep track, but by clinging on to the very sides of the road banks it was just possible to squeeze a Jeep through without crashing down to the depths below. But it wasn't very funny, really, driving up that track.

. . .

At this stage it might be as well to say that it took two full months to make a road from Bishenpur to Milestone 23. Apart from being a very big climb, the track presented every known difficulty. It seemed determined to prevent us from getting through. Time and time again the made up road was washed away before it had time to settle. Quagmires appeared all over the

## THE LAMPI

place. Long stretches of board road (corduroy track) had to be made, hundreds of trees cut down, stone causeways over a mile in aggregate constructed; and still it wasn't a road. Long after other stretches, miles in advance, had become first-class motor roads, the Bishenpur section still offered resistance. Poor Young, who was commanding that section, had a horrible time. He grew thinner and paler every day, and had a fever relapse in the middle of it all. But he is a dour Scot, and he simply told me that Bishenpur to the Summit would become a road if it was the last thing he did on earth.

I trusted him with the job, and he didn't let me down. In any but the worst of weather the Bishenpur section today is a top-gear job for a Jeep, and 15-cwt. trucks run regularly up to the Summit.

Young got to like that shocking bit of road, but I think secretly that he was relieved when early in September I replaced him by James, and Young became the commander of the section Khopum Valley—Irang River (M.s. 51) with headquarters at Lagairong.

. . .

By the time I got up to the mountains, Campbell, who had gone ahead of me, had established a forward H.Q. at Tairenpokpi Rest House and was there with Mossman, who had

## THE LAMPI

taken over the road construction from the Summit to Tairenpokpi. This section, from milestone 23 to milestone 27, had been one of those which the Engineers had in mind when they declared the bridle path to be impracticable. And they were nearly right.

Lightheartedly enough we undertook to make the road, but that section nearly brought us down. It took twenty-one precious days before it bore any semblance of being even a Jeep track, and not until the very end of September could one claim that it looked like a road.

. . .

What happened on July 28th nearly became historical. I got my Jeep to the Summit in the early afternoon, and for some unknown reason decided to try driving it to Tairenpokpi. Sergeant Botha, who was with me, realised of course that I had gone off my head, but he was quite philosophical. His attitude quite clearly was "if the Colonel says he is going to drive over a track which has scarcely had a spade on it, I suppose I shall have to go with him to be there when he breaks his neck." He didn't exactly say that, but he did look exactly like that.

And then suddenly Campbell appeared. He had walked up from the Rest House at Tairenpokpi to meet me. He nearly passed away when he saw the Jeep—which was firmly

## THE LAMPI

stuck for the first of its some thirty or forty times on that wicked journey. In he got, after a few passing Nagas had pulled us out, and away we went.

By hanging on to the bank, by going sideways, by reversing and by manœuvre we actually got to somewhere about the 24th milestone before a wall of rock confronted us. Literally, we lifted the Jeep over it and so, crawling along, missing the precipice time and again by an inch, building out stones over the edge to take the near-side wheels, we struggled to our Waterloo—that solid mountain of rock along which the track narrowed to 2' 9" for a distance of 30 yards—that horrible nightmare and nearly the graveyard of our hopes—the menace which became known as Botha's Slide.

. . .

Four solid weeks it took us to blast out Botha's Slide, and during that period we shifted 760 tons of rock. The C.R.E. was magnificent. He didn't know what was going on, but he did know that we were using up his gelignite at an alarming rate. But he never questioned it—and here let me pay tribute to the C.R.E. and his department. Never once did they fail to deliver, what we asked for quickly and to the full—and never once did they ask why we wanted the things. They helped tremendously.

. . .

## THE LAMPI

All the time the road was going on ahead of Tairenpokpi, and still Botha's Slide was a death trap, and still the rock fields round milestone 24 were holding up the Jeeps. It looked as though the Engineers were right, and we should have to give up.

Up till then we had been afraid to put a big blast into the slide for fear of bringing down the mountain, but on the night of 19th August I told Botha to do it. My words were these "the mountain can't be up in the air and down in the khud at the same time. Very well then, put in your big blast, and bring the mountain down if it is coming, and we will build a new road over the ruins. In other words, I will back my luck against the damned mountain." This decision I had come to after daily reports of narrow escapes by Jeep drivers and a nightmare ride of my own during the night of August 13th. We were, in fact, crossing the slide daily by Jeep with two wheels out over the khud on built-up stones, which of course collapsed regularly. A horrible place.

The miracle happened. The big blast exposed a solid rock face nine feet into the mountain side and the mountain held up. The relief was indescribable. Botha's Slide was soon to be removed. They attacked it with gelignite, crowbar, wedge and hammer, and turned 760 tons of solid rock over into the khud. The road was through and perfectly safe.

## THE LAMP

And still the work went on ahead, miles away by this time.

. . .

Jeeps are wonderful little things, but their drivers are more wonderful. Every day equipment, tools, and food had to be sent through for parties working far ahead. The Jeeps had to get through, or work came to a standstill. And they did get through, driven by their stout-hearted drivers.

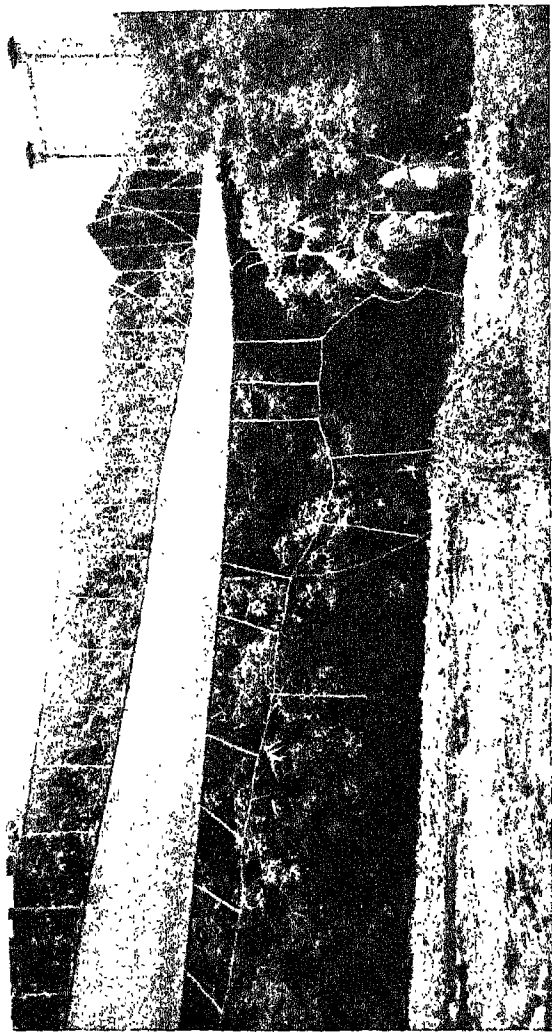
Scrambling along slimy rocks on 5 or 6 foot tracks, clawing their way to safety when they slipped, going backwards if they couldn't go forwards, in rain or fine they somehow always got through. What grand chaps they were—Bevan, O'Brien, Spirit, Strand, Cpl. Pike, Richards, Roberts, Walls—always ready to go out, realising fully that sooner or later one of them would dive over the khud to his death or maiming.

They had the Spirit of the Road burning very brightly in them.

. . .

But the inevitable had to happen. On August 13th I met Campbell driving his Jeep down to the River at M.s. 31, to which point the road had then reached. He was very cheery and was taking cigarettes and canteen goods down to the chaps who were ahead. I was on





"THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE HAD COLLAPSED"

NOTE:—This photograph was taken during the dry season.

## THE LAMPI

my way to Imphal to a conference which I had to attend. After saying 'Cheerio' I went on my way, and he on his.

At 8 o'clock that night in Imphal there came a distorted wireless message—"Serious accident . . . over khud . . . Campbell in Tairenpokpi . . . doctor . . . nagas." At 8-17, the M.O. and I left Imphal for the drive to Bishenpur which we did in record time. We were carrying blankets, hot tea, brandy, medical equipment, stretchers. And there started the nightmare drive.

The Jeep was waiting across the River, which was a roaring torrent following severe rains. The suspension bridge had collapsed, leaving one cable and the edge of the footpath suspended in the air. There was only one thing for it—hand over hand along that cable in the dark, a roaring flood underneath and pouring with rain. We did it all right, and indeed a second time that same night. The funny thing was when the Doctor trod on his bootlace halfway across. He was very nearly into the water then.

. . .

Night driving has always fascinated me; but not driving over the mountains from Bishenpur to Tairenpokpi on the night of 13th August, 1942. We started off—M.O. and self, and in

## THE LAMPI

the back Campbell's grand little batman, Duxbury, and Fitter Wiltshire, who had walked in with the news that Campbell had slipped over the khud, and had been carried in some three miles by Nagas. That he was critically ill and the Doctor was needed urgently.

We hadn't required much spurring before, but that news pressed the accelerator down, and off we rushed into the black night with lashing rain to accompany us. That we in turn didn't dive over the khud is just one of those things, but we didn't. Crossing Botha's Slide with its horrible crumbling edge and two inches to spare, with Duxbury holding a torch to shew the edge; slipping and sliding, and always the rain pelting us, we made it. We made those ten miles in 49 minutes—a record which stood even in daylight until late September.

. . .

There he lay. Nine broken ribs, a fractured skull, a lacerated face—and he said, "sorry to drag you out on a night like this, sir, but I knew you'd come all right. The Jeep's hardly damaged."

The M.O. went over him and decided to put him to sleep for the night, and return next day for a more detailed examination and treatment, because he hadn't got local anæsthetics with him and was afraid to give Campbell chloro-

## *THE LAMPI*

form. Chances of recovery sixty-forty if left lying where he was, quite undisturbed.

. . .

I met Campbell on 12th September—he was driving his Jeep along the road. He was in very good form and going to deliver canteen goods to the chaps in front, and to organise the last phases of the Road work. He was quite better, so he went on his way—and I on mine.

## CHAPTER IV.

Nagas are funny little people, but they did build the road.

They really are funny little people. They are filled with the most extraordinary courtesy and are mostly indescribably dirty. They are cheerful and happy and very loyal. Cocked away at the top of the mountains for safety's sake, they build their huts, and descend to the valleys to till the ground and to fish.

Not so very many years ago they were head hunters. There was a definite season for collecting heads from neighbouring villages, and during that season men did not stray very far from their villages at the tops of the hills. A gentleman of standing was one who had the greatest number of other gentlemen's heads decorating his mantelpiece—those acquired right inside the enemy's village being particularly valuable.

But out of season collecting was the height of bad form, and the trophy regarded as valueless.

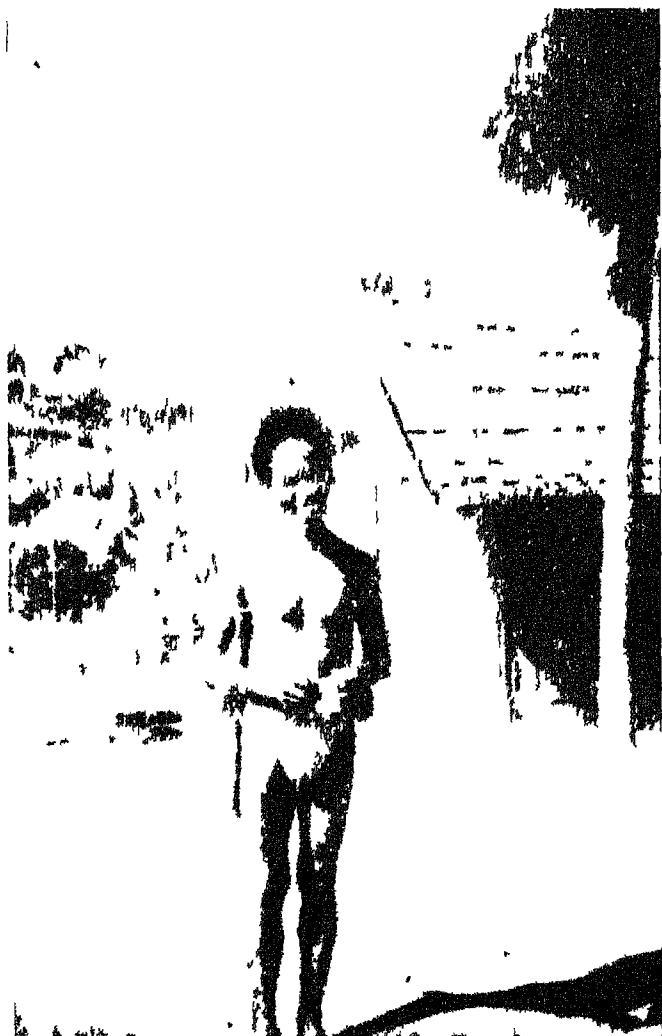
I said they were full of the most extraordinary courtesy.

. . .

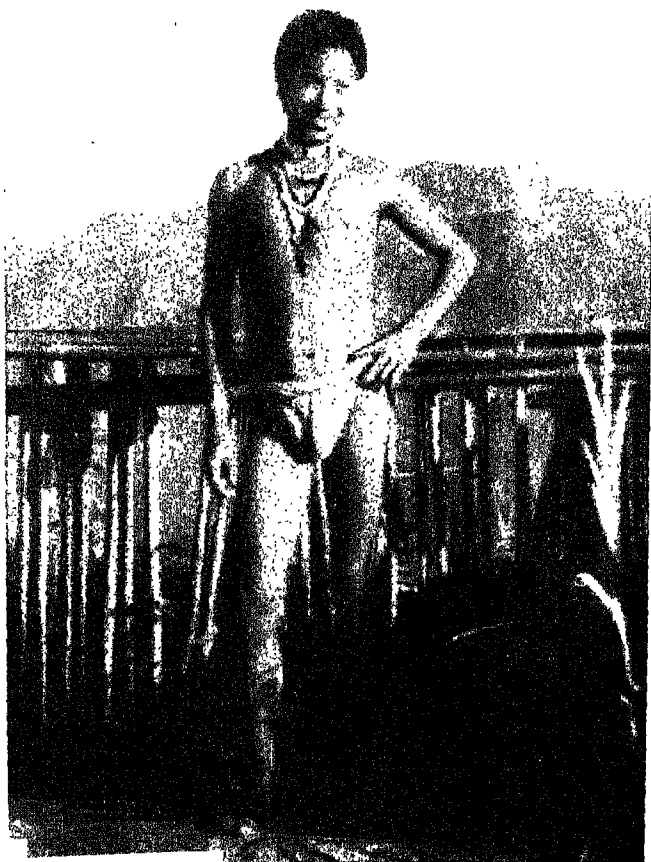
Their language is difficult. Intonation means as much as the words, which resound with 'ings', 'ongs', and 'ungs'.



NAGAS ARE FUNNY LITTLE PEOPLE BUT THEY DID BUILD THE ROAD



THEY ARE CHRISTIAN AND HAPPY



A GENTLEMAN OF STANDING



## THE LAMPI

The best way to get them on the job is to shew them a model of the road made out of mud and sticks. Once they grasp the idea they are off, diving into the jungle for timber, digging for stones and rocks, and the work has begun.

They think nothing of walking five miles to report, then four or five to the job, and returning in the evening tired out, but still cheerful. Always they tell you they want to work for the Sirkar and that they are loyal men. And work they do, all for the sum of One Rupee a day with an occasional handful of salt.

. . .

The visit of the headman is always an event. As soon as one gets to a Rest House the local headman appears—he knows hours in advance of your approach—and with him half a dozen of his followers. When we first appeared, their womenfolk used to clear off into the jungle, but in the end they got confidence. One headman asked me if he could send the women and children to look at the white soldiers "the like of which they have never seen."

An hour later on all sides could be seen faces peeping out of the jungle watching every movement of the soldiers—and within a few hours of that the women and children were drawing water for us, and later still working on the road in hundreds.

## THE LAMPI

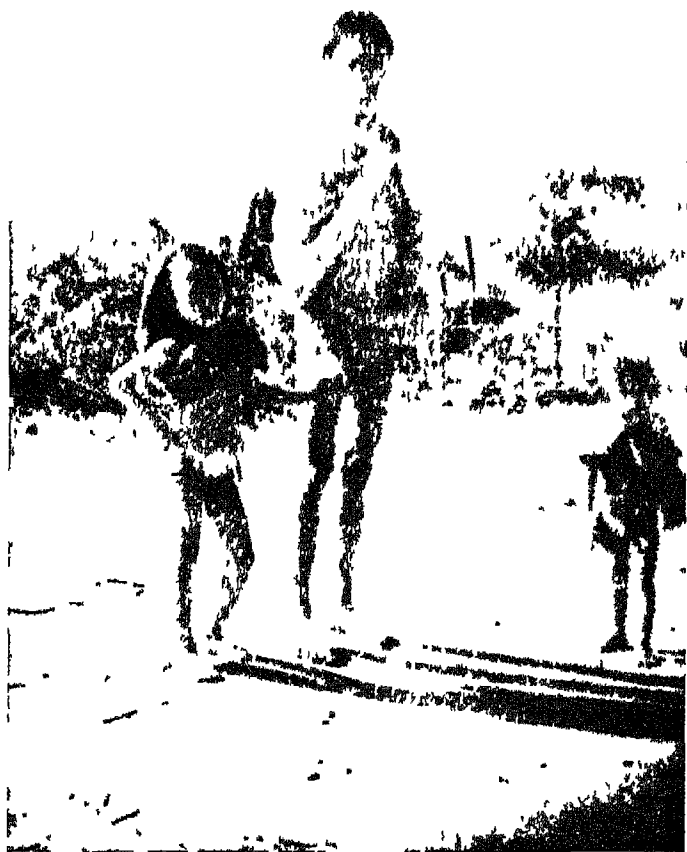
The Chapangs, or children, are funny little beggars. They work like anything, clearing stones and grass for some nine or ten hours a day all for four annas—or fourpence. If they are half-grown and really work hard, they can earn up to eight annas. At first the women used to bring their babies on their backs, and gravely claim four annas for them, but we soon cured them of that.

But I am diverging from the visit of the headman. As soon as he sees the 'Colonel Sahib' he gives a low bow and says 'Salaam'. Then he produces a tiny wicker basket with a chicken inside, or half a dozen eggs; from big headmen we have had an ox, a goat and a pig, on different occasions.

At that stage, you say 'thank you' and give him and his followers a double handful of salt each, whereupon he produces a bottle of Ju, or rice beer. From this you pour a libation and then drink from the bottle, pause a moment, smack your lips, then another mouthful. It is not unpalatable, but it is wiser not to examine too closely the bottle from which it comes!

If an animal gift has been produced you then order it to be killed, indicating what you want from the carcase—a leg, or chops or a steak—and the rest is handed back to them for a feast in your honour.

And then the durbar begins. They have heard of the "Lampi" and how the Sirkar wants



CHAPIN



## THE LAMPI

it built quickly. They will help, but their young men are at the harvest. They know they can earn rupees, but their children can't eat rupees while they can eat rice if it's harvested. But they will starve if it means serving the Sirkar—and after all the women can start the harvest. 'And will the Sahib please look at my foot which has pained me for a month.'

. . .

It's always the same. Each night, after the pay table, come the hurts and the ills, and he is well advised who takes the trouble to cure them. They will come miles for medicine, but will bring their friends with them to work on the road.

And what ills they get! Gangrene sores, masses of horridly septic jungle sores, ugly cuts, an occasional snake bite, dozens of malarial splcens, coughs, colds and belly-aches. All to be cured by the white man's medicine. The women never appear for medicine, but occasionally a child arrives, bursting with importance to describe with relish and in detail that his Mother has, say, rheumatism or something or other, and he has called for the medicine. He gets it.

. . .

They ask for other things. One of the most shattering in the writer's experience was when some fifty Christian Nagas, of whom there are

## THE LAMPI

many, called one Sunday evening in September. They had worked all day on the "Lampi", although it was Sunday. Back in their village some forty miles away they had a service every Sunday night from their pastor. But tonight their pastor was not there, and would the Sahib give them their evening service. Through the interpreter the Sahib did. They recited the Lord's Prayer and sang familiar hymns in their odd language: then, using the parable of the Saviour rebuking those who pointed to men working on Sunday, the Sahib reassured them that their work that day was Lord's work, as it was to help in bringing peace to the land. That it went down well is evidenced by the fact that their spokesman said that "it would do until they got back to their pastor!"

. . .

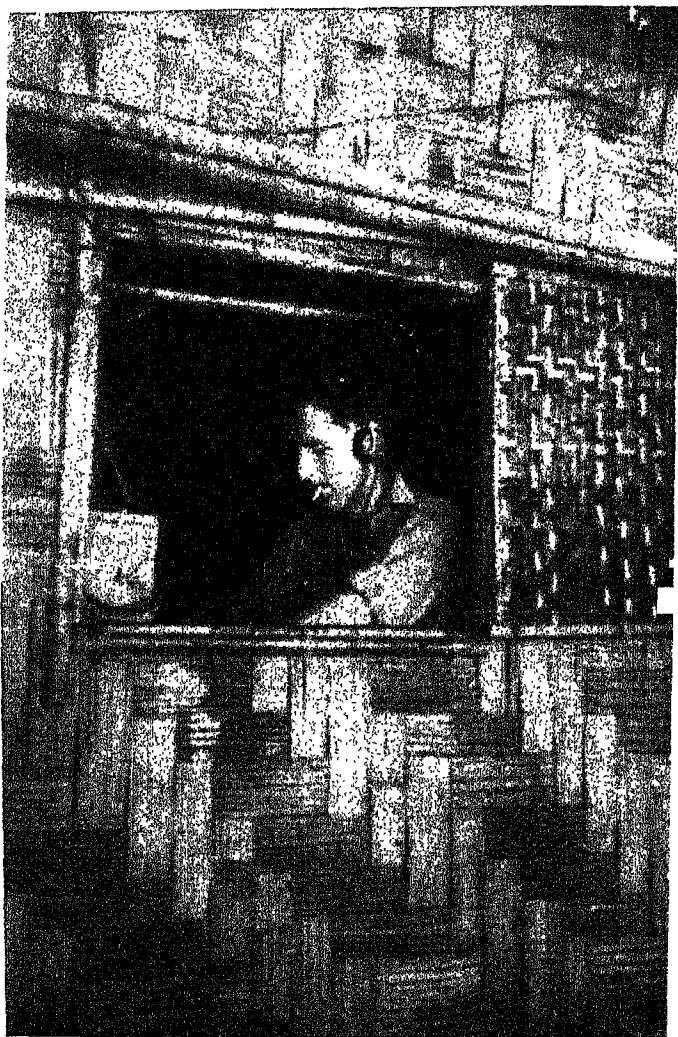
Their interest in fire-arms is that of a child in the Chamber of Horrors. But every man wants to have a permit to carry a gun—a privilege very jealously guarded by the Government—but given to faithful and loyal men.

. . .

All of them are very honest—anything left about on the road is brought in at once. No man ever claims more than his just wage. In this respect they are a revelation.

. . .





"I HAD TO HAVE IT TAKEN INDOORS"

## THE LAMPI

If a labour shortage threatens, tell them that those who work next day will get a handful of salt and hear "the music". "The music" is a gramophone, which is an abiding wonder and joy to them. They will sit around until long after dark, forgetful of food and home alike, listening to the gramophone. They sigh like children after each record, and palpitate with excitement when they see another being prepared. Best of all they like a song with a woman's voice. They don't know how she got into the box, but it's good.

. . .

Never will I forget the night when, quite casually, I pointed to the wireless set and remarked that with that machine I could talk to the General Sahib in Imphal, no less, and even hear the people in India and England talking, every day.

That was a stupid thing to say. Apart from regarding the wireless operator—a most inoffensive man—as somebody dabbling in black magic, myself as something rather bizarre, and the whole business as rather shocking, they sent for their friends and relations to see and hear about this dark green box of magic. I had to have it taken indoors in the end, but they always looked rather peculiarly at the wireless operator after that.

. . .

## THE LAMPI

Why we want to build the Road, which they call the "Lampi", is beyond their comprehension really, except that it's obvious Jeeps won't run on bridle tracks. They have got over the shock of surprise at seeing the first Jeep, when one and all dived into the jungle and couldn't be got out for hours. Some of them have even had the fearful joy of riding in one, terrified to death at first, then beaming with pride, and finally roaring with laughter at their less exalted friends working on the road.

But why we want to ride from Bishenpur to Jirighat, they don't understand. Lateral communications mean nothing to them. The peace of their hills is disturbed by the roar of car engines, but they don't seem to mind. All they know is that these peculiar white soldier sahibs have a bad fever. A fever of impatience which is driving them to work from dawn to dusk, all for a Rupee, on the "Lampi"—the "Lampi"—always the "Lampi".

They know too, the "Lampi" must go on



"VIEW SOUTH FROM M. S. 36"



THEY PUSHED OFF INTO THE RISING JUNGLE

## CHAPTER V.

We are getting on with the Road. River Station has been established at Leimatak River (M.s. 31½), and as long ago as 3rd August Brown went through with Sergeant Martin and nine men to tackle the difficult stretch up to Milestone 38, a climb of some 3000 feet in seven miles. And closely on his heels went Harold West on 5th August, with orders to start at Milestone 38 and smash through to the Khopum Valley (M.s. 43) in twelve days—and not an hour longer. With West went Sergeant Johnson, a very capable man and a certainty for the job of punching through.

All this was happening whilst we were battling with Botha's Slide and the rock fields in the Tairenpokpi area, and even before old Campbell went over the side.

What a job Brown had. For some extraordinary reason there are no Naga villages near the river, so he had no coolies. But Brown and his chaps didn't seem to care: they pushed off into the rising jungle to make their Jeep track, out of touch with us except by native runner, and never a moan from them. And they did produce a track.

From time to time I heard of them and then, one day, that they had found and occupied a

## THE LAMPI

Rest House at M.s. 36 which hitherto we had not known about. Brown added as an afterthought that, less one stone slide at  $35\frac{3}{4}$  miles, the track was jeepable to the Rest House.

I at once sent Despatch-Rider Morge forward on his motor cycle to tell Brown I was advancing to join him on the 17th. Morge obliged by driving his machine over the khud at the rock slide at  $35\frac{3}{4}$ . He was unhurt, and only went down thirty feet. He limped home quite cheerfully, and volunteered to take another machine the following day to have a second try to get through. That man could ride a motor bike up Snowden.

. . .

I knew that rock slide. It was a series of rock steps like the entrance to a cathedral, rising up some thirty feet, and one of the places condemned by the Engineers as making the road impracticable. It was also condemned by the mules on our first reconnaissance, when they resolutely refused to mount it. Here, then, was another Botha's Slide, only without such a simple solution.

. . .

On 17th August, Brown and I looked at it from all angles. The soldiers promptly called it Lousy Lizzie—why, I don't know, but Lousy



LOUSIE LIZZIE — CATHEDRAL STEPS



## THE LAMPI

Lizzie it is today, and a name board testifies to that effect.

. . .

Whilst we were examining it, Driver Spain and Sergeant Curtis disappeared over the Khud in a Jeep at M.s. 31. They were pinned underneath about eight feet down but were unhurt, and so was the Jeep. And by an amazing coincidence, within the next few days a visiting officer did exactly the same thing at the same place. But that is by the way.

. . .

What to do with Lousy Lizzie was the problem, and a sticky one it was. All the time the road was going on miles ahead where West's party was making tremendous going, pressing on for the Valley. But Lousy Lizzie, like the poor, was always with us, and the road would not be open until she was cleared somehow.

I let Brown go on: I wanted him to get to M.s. 38 so as to link up with where the West Party had started, because I had to keep my contract with the General to have Jeeps in the Valley in six weeks, and time was pressing. West himself, leaving Sergeant Johnson behind, had gone on to Oinamlong to prepare for work on that distant stretch, and I wanted Brown to get to Nungba to effect the junction between the Khopum Valley and West in Oinamlong.

## THE LAMPI

But Lousy Lizzie stayed behind, the hussy. We took her, and blasted her, and shook her to bits, and gathered up the fragments, sorted the whole lot out, put the bits together and turned the Cathedral steps into a double hairpin bend. She was not her new self actually until as late as 26th September, although Jeeps passed her many times a day from 18th August onwards. She required a lot of titivating and her face properly lifting, before she ceased to be a syren luring drivers to destruction. She is now a placid, matronly person.

. . .

On 20th August came the electric news that Sergeant Johnson had broken through to the Valley; this coinciding with Brown reaching M.s. 38. This was news indeed. We had bettered the promised time by five days, and now the Brown and West Parties could rush off right forward to start working back to us.

The General was delighted. Apart from the fact that we had kept faith on time, there was now communication with Khopum Valley, and in a few more miles the job would be half over. "Press on, press on," were his orders.

We tried working by night with bonfires and hurricane lamps, but it was useless. Mosquitoes and flying insects killed that idea.

. . .

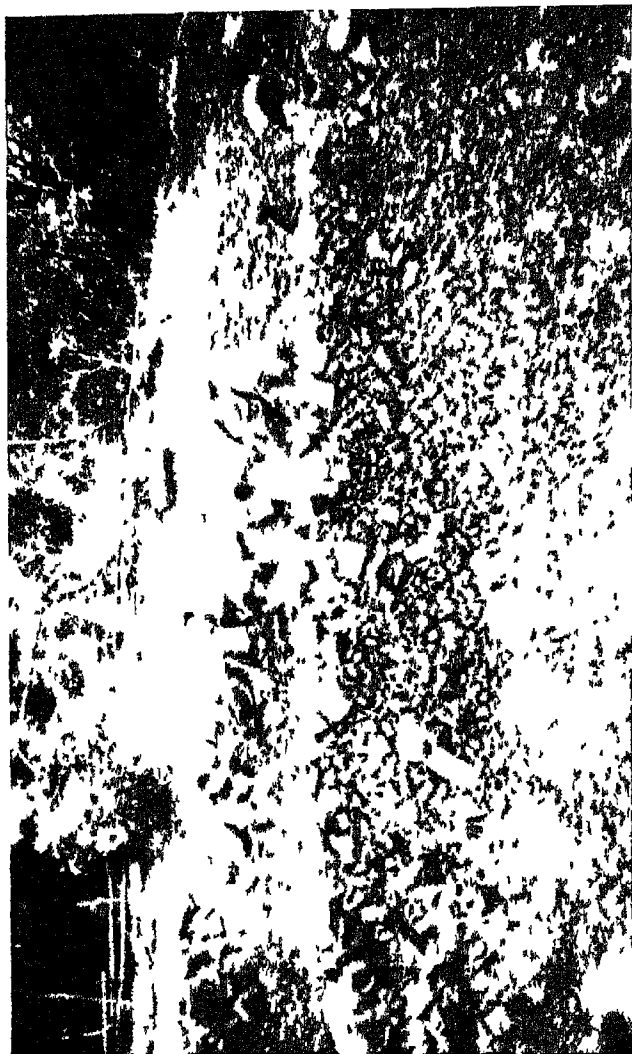


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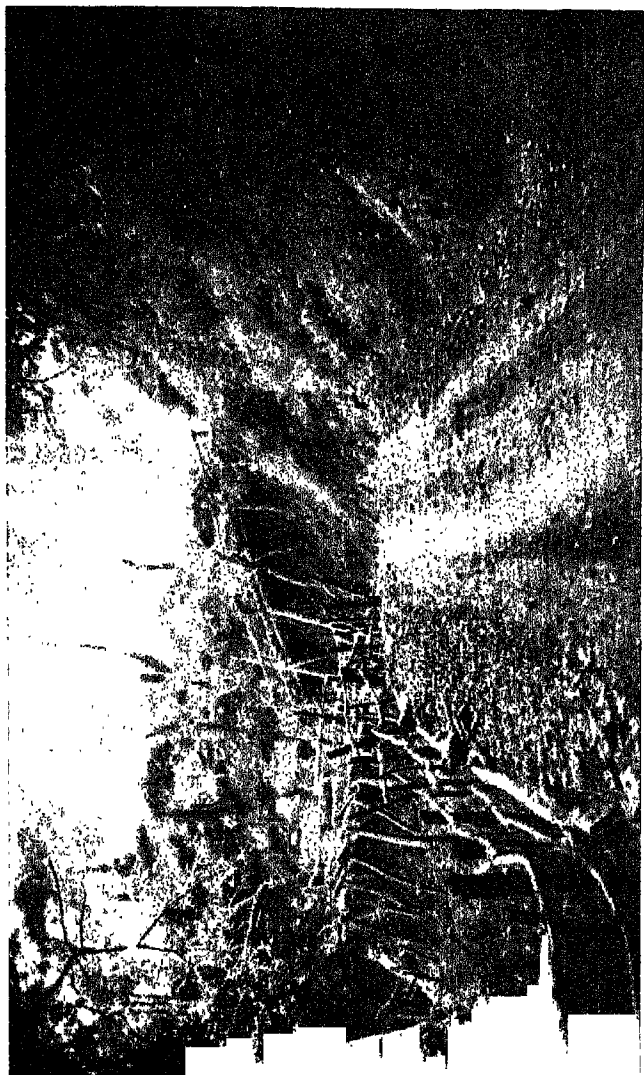
AND SHOOK HIM

~ORITD OUI IHP BHS





"PUT THEM TOGETHER"



"LIFTED HER FACE"



AND NOW SHE IS A PLACID MAIROONLY PERSON

## THE LAMPI

About that time I started to notice how strained-looking some of the men were getting. Tinned food was essential on the job, although the Jeeps brought bread and vegetables regularly, and this was beginning to tell on them. I felt that the pace was hot, and that it would get hotter, and I began to feel afraid for some of them. They were fit enough then and enjoying it, but they were fining down: they will carry the mark of the Road on them for years. "Get on—Get on—we must have the Road"—they will think of it all their lives.

. . .

At this stage the plan for the final assault was formulated.

Bannister was to go to the very end at Jirighat and work back, with faithful Sergeant Botha as his second-in-command. Harold West from Oinamlong was to work east and west to join Brown and Bannister respectively, and Brown, from Nungha, was also to work east and west to join Young (sent up to Khopum Valley from Bishenpur) and West respectively. And so it worked out.

. . .

Well, we are into the Valley, and one fine afternoon Spirit and I drove the first Jeep down. How the Nagas dived into the paddy fields when they saw the Jeep!

## THE LAMPI

The big problem was how to traverse the three miles odd of squashy mud along the floor of the Valley and make it fit for motor transport.

At the far end of the Valley we had a good friend in Paw Chun Lung, the headman of Lagairong, and found another in Akumba, the headman of the important village of Khopum. Upon the two men we urged the need for coolies and more coolies, and in the end they produced over 250.

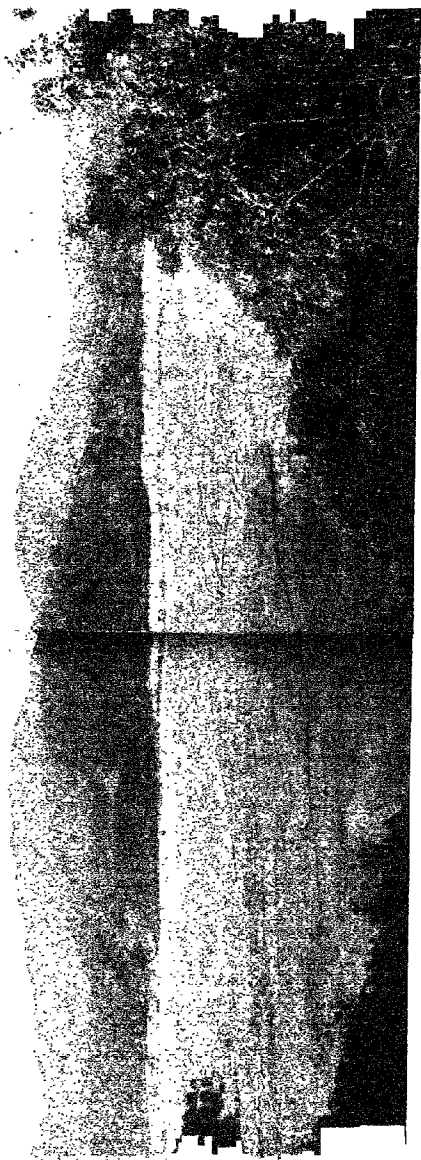
These men, under the guidance of Langton and Vinson, raised the track nearly three feet—for the whole length of the Valley M.s. 43 to M.s. 46½—and drained the original mud track off into water channels. The whole job took three weeks and was a magnificent example of determination. The picture of Langton reading from the 'Manual of Field Engineering' and then issuing his orders was priceless.

. . .

And what about the Khopum Valley? Lagairong Rest House is at the western end of it, perched up on the hill, and the view is wonderful. Dawn and sunset are beautiful enough to bring tears to one's eyes. The inhabitants are friendly, loyal and helpful.

Khopum Valley, responsible for the idea of the Road, has been ventilated. It is no longer a menace, nor is it sinister. It is becoming an old friend, trusted and known. Rolling back to





THE KHORUM VALLEY

NOTE:—The white mark is the Lampi in the left foreground.



## THE LAMPI

Lagairong in the falling light, one reaches the Valley floor from the hills with a sigh of relief—now for the home run. I find myself humming the tune "Over the Hills to Skye" to the beat of the Jeep engine.

The home run. What a description for the place which looked so sinister and threatening on the map, and such a beautiful menace when Botha and I first saw it.

Far away on the hill-top a light is shewing—that's the Rest House—rest, warmth, light and "the music". It gets nearer and nearer, then disappears as we enter the jungle climb for the last mile. And then we are there. Cheery voices, lights and laughter—"thought you were lost, sir," "How's the Jeep running," "Did you bring any gelignite, sir," "How are they doing on Lousy Lizzie?" And last of all, often forgotten altogether—"Any letters?"

And so we are home, mounting up to the bungalow, in the very last of the light—look at the Valley. If it's moonlight, don't look at all—it's enchanting and takes the mind off the Road.

The light is going now. Good night, Valley. Good night, friend. Good night.

## CHAPTER VI.

A Jeep track's a Jeep track, but a Road's a Road.

. . . .

Quite early on the General had made it clear that although he wanted a Jeep track to Jirighat, he expected to be able to run 15-cwt. trucks along it. This made a big difference. It meant instead of a narrow safe track, a wide safe road had to be made.

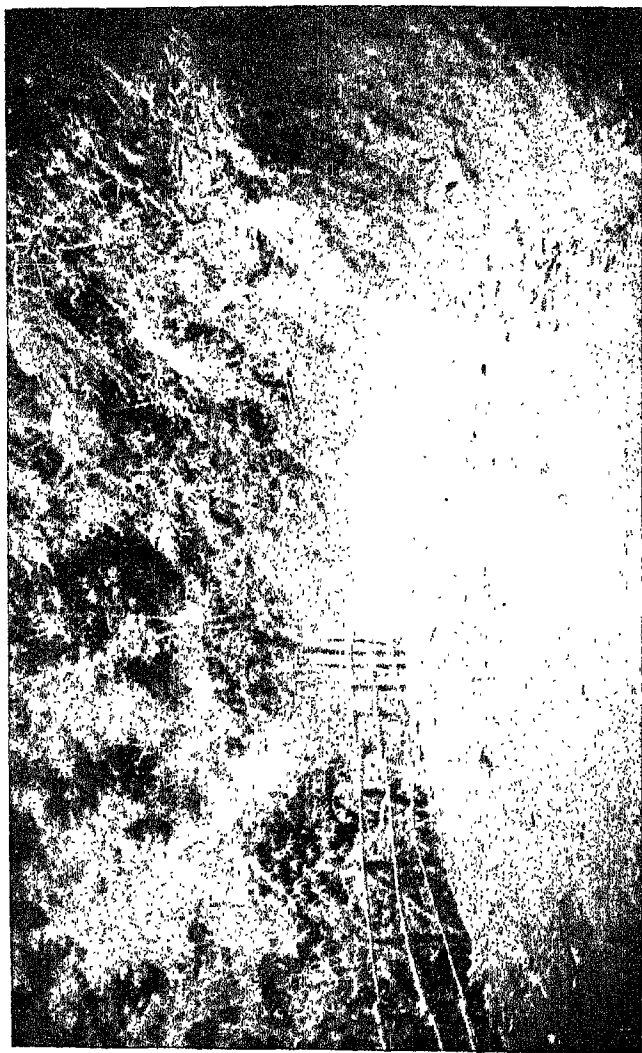
. . . .

Away ahead went the Jeep track makers. Blasting and hewing : bridges, of which some 200 were made on the whole road, springing up all the way.

Slowly behind them plodded the Road makers. Widening, cambering, surfacing and fencing. Opening out hairpin bends, blasting away rock slides. Battling with the Lousy Lizzies of the Road. Slowly they came along. Every soldier's ambition was 250 yards of made and fenced road a day. His realisation, except on red letter days, was 120 yards with probably 20 yards destroyed by rain overnight. But how they worked, and what unexpected people came to the surface. Jenkins and Wiltshire as heavy



A JEEP TRACK & A JEP TRACK



"BUT A ROAD IS A ROAD

## THE LAMPI

task workers—they finished the Lousy Lizzie job. Langton, always looked upon more as a boy than a man, crashing along handling a couple of hundred coolies with consummate skill. All three earned their promotion.

. . .

And what about Mycock. What a find. In ordinary Regimental life, Mycock is a Wireless Electrical Fitter, and rarely to be seen about the place. On the Lampi he is Mycock Sahib, the Road Builder. It was he who developed the technique of finishing off that obtains right along the road. Without doing him an injustice, he was given a section one day as a stop-gap. What he did made us gasp—it was a Brooklands track. He went right through with the Road—and the bringing to perfection of the surface is called “Mycocking the Road”. He was a find.

. . .

As I went forward a step, I left behind trusted men to finish. Steady Sergeant Watson—reliable, able and keen. Away back at Bishenpur, James now reigned. That same James who was to have the honour of being the first through to Jirighat.

. . .

And along crawled the Road—the tortoise of construction behind the Jeep track hares.

. . .

## THE LAMPI

Away forward, Bannister had got down to it. Unfortunately — very unfortunately — Sergeant Botha got a bad leech bite, and had to go to hospital in Silchar. Sergeant Carberry, a very old friend from Dunkirk days, was hurried forward. Poor old Carberry was never allowed to settle anywhere for long:—an emergency—‘where’s Carberry now? Send him.’ Good chap, with only one interest—the Regiment and its works. Anyway, Bannister, who was drawing his supplies from Silchar and working towards us, made slow but steady progress. Night after night—94 $\frac{3}{4}$ —94 $\frac{1}{2}$ —94 $\frac{1}{4}$ . A halt for two or three days at 91 $\frac{1}{4}$  with a nasty rock slide—91 $\frac{1}{4}$ —91 $\frac{1}{4}$ —would they never move? 91 $\frac{1}{4}$ —91—by gad, they’re on again—it won’t be long now. 90 $\frac{3}{4}$ . That’s all right. Keep it up.

. . . . .

Harold West in his section was more ambitious. He started off moving west from M.s. 80, and made two miles of Brooklands track before he was stopped and turned east to make first a Jeep track down to Barak River.

He did it all right, and then back to his first love—his beloved road to the west, to the Makru River, to link up with Bannister.

Campbell detailed the finishing touches on West’s job when he went through. Much was to be done, and he sent me a very full report. West should have been the first to bring his

## THE LAMPI

section to a finish, because it was the shortest. West's party says it will be the best, although they have taken much longer.

. . .

Brown, that most reliable young man, had the worst job. He went off to Nungba, and very soon had a jeep track to ride on from the Irang River at M.s. 51 up to the Rest House at M.s. 63. But what a track! When the road makers struck it, under Sergeant Marner, they prayed long and hard. It was a shocker. Rocks, poor bridges, narrows over 300 feet khuds—all the fun of the fair. I believe if I asked Sergeant Marner to build me a road down below for an interview with Satan, he would only ask for more tools.

. . .

More tools. What that phrase conjures up! Nagas making wooden spades because we hadn't any others. Using saplings as crowbars. And hands for mud and gravel. We never had a single wheelbarrow, or drove a single nail, in the whole 100 miles of road we built. More tools. Rush them forward as soon as a section is finished. "Another wire, sir, from Mr. West. More tools!" "Tell him to use his hands."

. . .

Well, there it was. Brown's Jeep track to Nungba; and away went Brown building a road

## THE LAMPI

from Nungba to M.s. 68. Building a road—not a track. As the pace grew hotter, I sent Rogers, the Signals Officer, over Brown's head to M.s. 69, at Kambiron, to build a road from there to the Barak at M.s. 76 to join with Harold West.

. . .

Poor old Rogers had rather a thin time on the road. Our signals were by wireless, except for odd lengths of 'phone here and there. Wireless is a wonderful thing, but in hilly jungle its efficacy diminishes very rapidly. Rogers lived in an atmosphere of "Haven't you got that message through yet," "That thing doesn't make sense," "Why the devil haven't you got the reports," etc., etc. But in the latter stages it all sorted itself out and signals were good, and placid old Rogers—always called the 'Lodger'—ambled along and still found time to build a bit of road. A good chap.

. . .

The administration of the Road was, of course, a tremendous problem. The further out the parties got, the longer the communications, the harder to keep them supplied.

Jeeps were more precious than gold. We never had more than six, and then only in the last month. We had three before that. How Sergeant Curtis and his L.A.D. kept them on the

## THE LAMPI

road is a book in itself: but he did. He was always either fishing Jeeps out of the khud, or repairing broken springs (yes, repairing Spring steel, all you engineers) or seized gear-boxes—or making water wheels for charging batteries or something. The formula was always the same—"Well, there it is, Sergeant Curtis. You know what I want. How long will it take you?" "Three days, sir." "I want it in 24 hours" "Very good, sir" and for 24 hours, time and time again he and his men worked, and the job was always ready. Little Parker, racked with fever, Pike, all of them—"Very good, sir" and there it was. We couldn't have got through without them. And at the very end poor little Parker got crushed between two skidding lorries and had to be rushed away to hospital—just bad luck.

. . .

Away in the background, people struggled to get us petrol. The Dimapur Road helped enormously by collapsing every other day. Petrol was gold, too—but no petrol, no progress. Men can't live on the country when the country itself has no food. And for some obscure reason there is no game in this part of the country, except an odd bear or an odd leopard and lots of monkeys—and they're not fit to eat. So we had to get rations forward. Ian Campbell and

## THE LAMPI

Hobden, the Adjutant, were the mainsprings of supply, and well they did. Night or day it was all the same with them. They bargained, argued, wangled, and got what they wanted—and through it came. The Jeeps brought every pound of it with their very gallant drivers.

. . .

To say there is no food in the country is not strictly true. The country abounds in things to eat, but not of the quality to support manual workers accustomed to the heavy types of English foods nor in the quantity to ensure any regularity of supply. The Naga is a poor man, and any wealth is measured by his few cattle, goats or pigs.

An occasional pig or an ox certainly came our way, and obtained at very cheap prices. More often a goat was part of our diet. Goat cutlets are very good.

Chickens we got in reasonable quantities and eggs as a rule, but I had been impressed with the fact that what we bought from the Nagas deprived them or their families, and consequently we did not attempt to live on the country.

Bamboo shoots as a green vegetable helped to keep the men fit. Served hot, or in a stew, they are not unlike asparagus. Served cold, with vinegar, when obtainable, they really do taste like tinned asparagus.



FBI JETIS BROUGHT IVLRY TOUND OF II



## THE LAMPI

How many English housewives know that vegetable marrow shoots make a wonderful green vegetable—somewhat like spinach. And that the most palatable way of eating pumpkin is to fry it? How many people boil potatoes in their jackets with half a dozen chillies in the water? The potatoes are delicious, and the liquor goes well in soup: or cold, mixed with a little vinegar, makes a first-rate light sauce for plain bully beef. Who, of all the people living in the countryside, catch ordinary brook or pond tiddlers and serve them as whitebait?

When we had time to devote to it we caught fresh fish which were excellent. We even made bacon, but it required so much attention that it was a one man job—and we hadn't a man to spare as the pace became hotter.

Certainly only a fool would starve in the hills, but supplies could not be relied upon.

. . .

Still the Road went on. August became September. When, when? Every day nearer to the joining up of the sections, each night shading the progress on the map.

The nightly conference. The questions and the requirements.

I always made a point of telling my own men what was happening in the other sections. We discussed what had happened in our own

## THE LAMPI

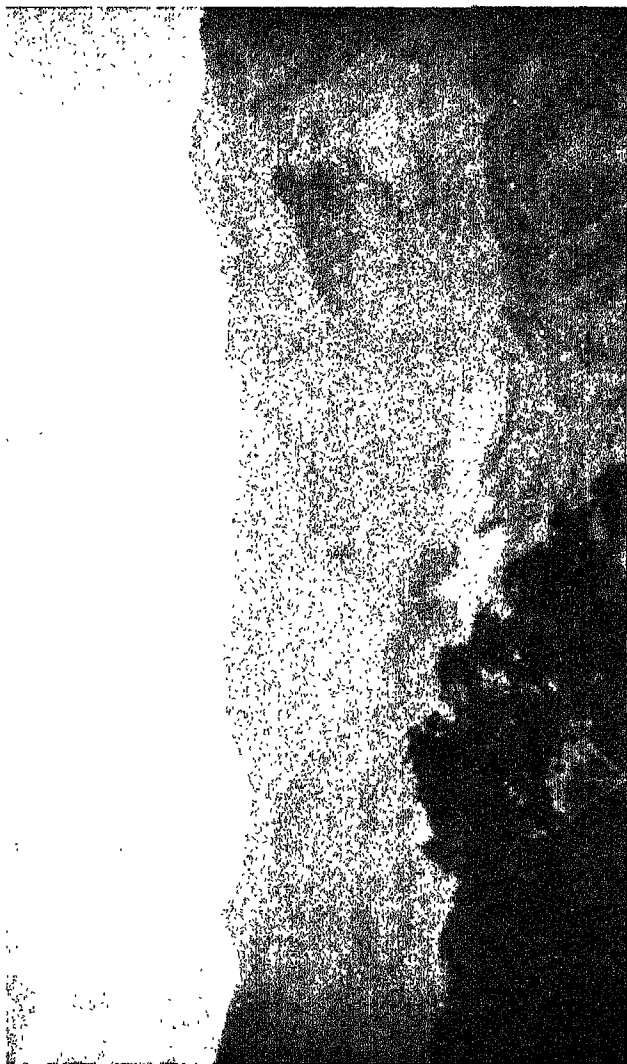
area that day, and what we should do tomorrow. "Any questions?" From the questions I got a true insight into the real problems; I was able to make more accurate forecasts from the questions alone. "When shall we get more coolies, sir?" "If there are so few Nagas in this part can't we send somebody to get more Kukis?" "When River Section have finished, can we have their tools, sir?" "Don't you think if we cut a new road past Lousy Lizzie it would be quicker?" "What is the war news?"

The requirements were very varied. A new topee, some iodine, a pair of boots, airgraph forms. Cigarettes and matches were reasonably plentiful all along, and the soldiers gave some away daily to their Nagas. Six Nagas will enjoy one cigarette—passing it from one to another. Most Naga women smoke pipes with native tobacco. It is advisable to keep out of range when the pipes are in full swing!

. . . .

On they went, men with topees flattened and hanging round their ears, sodden with rain and pulped; torn clothing, worn-out boots: but they bathed and shaved every day, and Naga women washed their clothes.

On they went, disappearing over distant hills in the mornings, trudging home at nights. Sickened with fatigue, wringing wet with



"RANGE ON RANGE . . ."

—AS FAR AS THE LXF CAN SEE



## THE LAMPI

perspiration, and having been soaked once or twice during the day by torrential rain-storms. Back over the hills at night they came.

. . .

Those hills. Range after range of them extending over 100 miles from east to west, and hundreds of miles north and south. How beautiful they are to look at. Livid with colour in the sunlight, echoing the cries of monkeys. Magnificent trees towering dizzily upwards, festooned with creepers of all sorts. Square miles of bamboo, that wonderful wood which is used for everything. It makes beds and bowls, spoons and forks, shovels, fences, furniture and fuel, roofs and walls. Its uses are unending.

It is from Nungba that one sees the hills in their true beauty. The majestic lines of sweeping ridges, ranging ever southwards, are simply wonderful. Each has a character of its own. Over to the left are the towering peaks surrounding the Khopum Valley—pink at sunrise, vividly green in the midday sun, gloriously purple at evening time. To the right the verdant slopes leading up to the village, but behind, the black—and always black—peak which is supposed to be the home of all the ‘Humpis’ or Tigers.

In the middle, three ridges running away as far as the eye can see; greens, yellow, reds of showing earth, black with shadow, silver with glistening water. Wonderful medleys of glorious

## THE LAMPI

colour blending together in the pearly blue-grey of distance.

As far as the eye can see, range on range, peak on peak, each vying with the other for sheer beauty.

The hills are beautiful, but pitilessly cruel. Before the Road, a sick or injured man had to stay in the valleys to get better or die, because he could never get over the heights. In June, the Burma refugees found that out, and many hundreds stayed—and died. The quiet hills—mountains really, five and six thousand feet high—murdered them. They are pitiless to the weak.

. . .

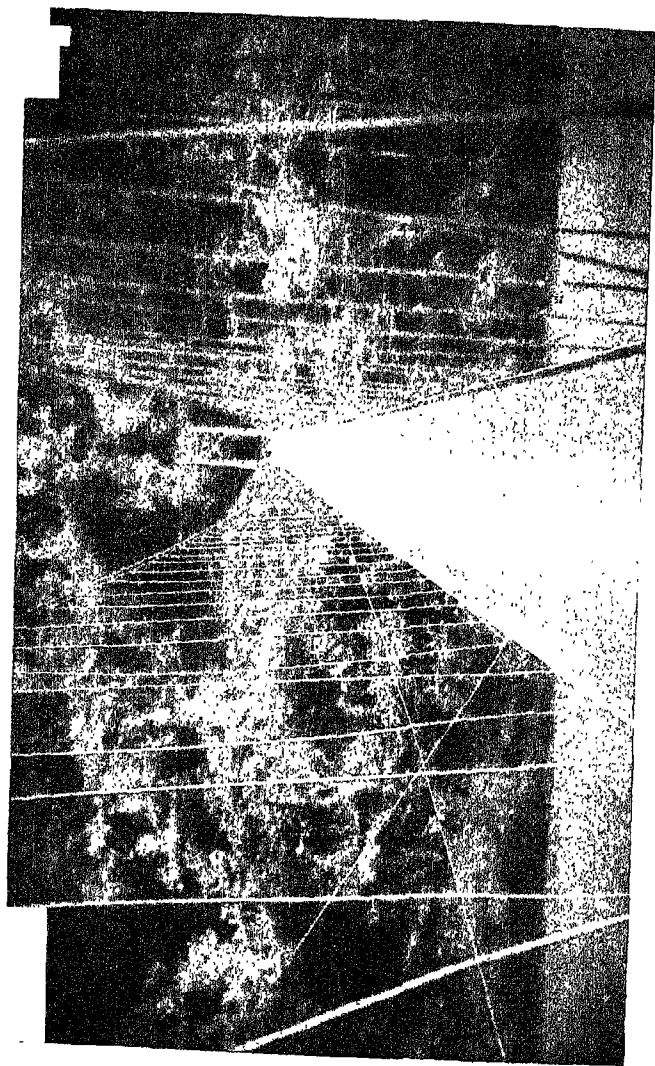
The valleys worried us as much as the hills. Each valley has its river running north and south. And each river has its suspension bridge running east and west. There are seven in all on the road, varying in length from about 150 yards to 50 yards.

When those suspension bridges were built, men thought in terms of pack horses and oxen in single file. They are just 4' 7" in width—so is a Jeep. Reputedly they carry some 4000 lbs.—a Jeep weighs 2200 lbs—but the Bishenpur bridge collapsed under the weight of five small mules, about 1750 lbs.

The result of all this was that we had to run our Jeeps in stages and incidentally squeeze each

THE FAMILY HAS ITS FUN





"AND EACH RIVER HAS ITS SUSPENSION BRIDGE"

## THE LAMPI

one that went forward across those swinging bridges. When it was forward, it stayed forward.

When the Road is built the stages will disappear, because not only are we going to widen and strengthen the suspension bridges, but we are going to build trestle bridges across all the rivers. Then the same Jeep one enters in Bishenpur will go right through to Silchar.

As it was, the road was built by staging the Jeeps. Bishenpur to Leimatak River, a total of  $13\frac{1}{4}$  miles; Leimatak to Irang River through the Khopum Valley, 20 miles; Irang River to Barak Ahu River (Brown's section), 24 miles; Barak Ahu River to Makru River (West's section), 12 miles; Makru River to main Barak River, 15 miles. After that there were no rivers to worry us, right to Lakhipur and Silchar.

The suspension bridges were a real nuisance. They were old and obviously unreliable, and wedging a Jeep across was always a gamble—would it collapse or not? And much time was lost transshipping from Jeep to Jeep across the bridges.

But all that will soon be put right. When we have time to attend to them the rivers won't worry us very much. In any case, we have to get through to Silchar for cement before we can start making concrete piers. So shove on with the Road and never mind the Bridges.

### *THE LAMPI*

September started to roll out, and still the rains hampered us, but steady progress was made every day.

It was getting exciting now—'Press on, press on.'

## CHAPTER VII.

Sept 7 COMMANDING OFFICER TO ALL STATIONS. ENCODED. IMPORTANT. ROAD NOW ASSUMES MAJOR IMPORTANCE. IT HAS BEEN DECLARED FIRST LINE OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE WEST. TELL YOUR MEN AND URGE THEM ON TO SUPERHUMAN EFFORTS. GOOD LUCK AND QUICKLY THROUGH.

and

Sept. 9. COMMANDING OFFICER TO ALL STATIONS. ENCODED. IMPORTANT. G.O.C's PLANS REQUIRE ROAD OPEN TWENTY ONE SEPTEMBER. I RELY ON EVERY MAN. N. 4 MAY PAY KHOPUM WAGE. N. 7 MEET ME MORNING ELEVENTH M.S. 55 FOR BLASTING. SENDING JEEP TO N. 4 AND DOCTOR FOR GUNNER LOWTHER. N. 9 SEND ROAD REPORT URGENTLY. N. 2 PRESS ON WITH WORK INDICATED. ALL EMPLOY MAXIMUM NUMBER COOLIES.

So now we know.

. . .

I had been to Imphal for another conference and, as usual, had seen the General. Some time

## THE LAMPI

back I had given a tentative date of 21st September for the first Jeep through to Jirighat, and now the General told me that he relied implicitly on that date.

. . .

On September 21st. Only a miracle could do it, but out went the messages. The pace is hotter, hotter, hotter. "Get on with it. I know you haven't—but get on with it. I want a Road, not excuses from your coolies. We haven't got any more men, You'll have to take it on yourself."

And it rained and rained and washed away the surfaces and flooded the roads we had made and they were done again and again. The main structures held, but the surfaces went.

By September 21st! Can we do it? Optimism, hope, depression, dejection—it's impossible unless—unless what? Unless the miracle happens. What miracle?

"Oh, I don't know. Stop talking about the damned thing.

Good night, Valley. You started all this and you just lie there not caring a damn—I suppose you've seen too many curious things down the centuries to be excited about the 21st of September this year.

Good night."

## THE LAMPI

It was on the 14th September that the two civilians came up to Lagairong. I had been told that they were coming, but I didn't know quite what for. James brought them up, with Driver Strand driving the Jeep.

It appeared that one of them wanted a rush consignment of salt and rice brought through for political reasons, and he wanted to see what help we could give him with the road—in a word, if the road would take the traffic. It was a big consignment, and he was very anxious. We sent him back to Imphal reassured.

. . .

The other one was far more important. He represented an historical happening as far as the Road was concerned, but he didn't know it, and nor did we.

What he wanted, no less, was to be Jeeped to Silchar, because he had to get to Delhi in a hurry. Shades of our first fears! Here was a very important official—and he was very important—discarding the regular Dimapur Road route and risking the urgency of his trip by using our poor little road which was not even through to Jirighat. Were we not a week in hand on the promised 21st September?

He had risked everything in coming out to Lagairong—missed his Dimapur Road connection, missed his chance of catching a train at Manipur Road Station, and pledged everything

## THE LAMPI

on our getting him through. He had to catch the night train from Calcutta to Delhi on 16th September.

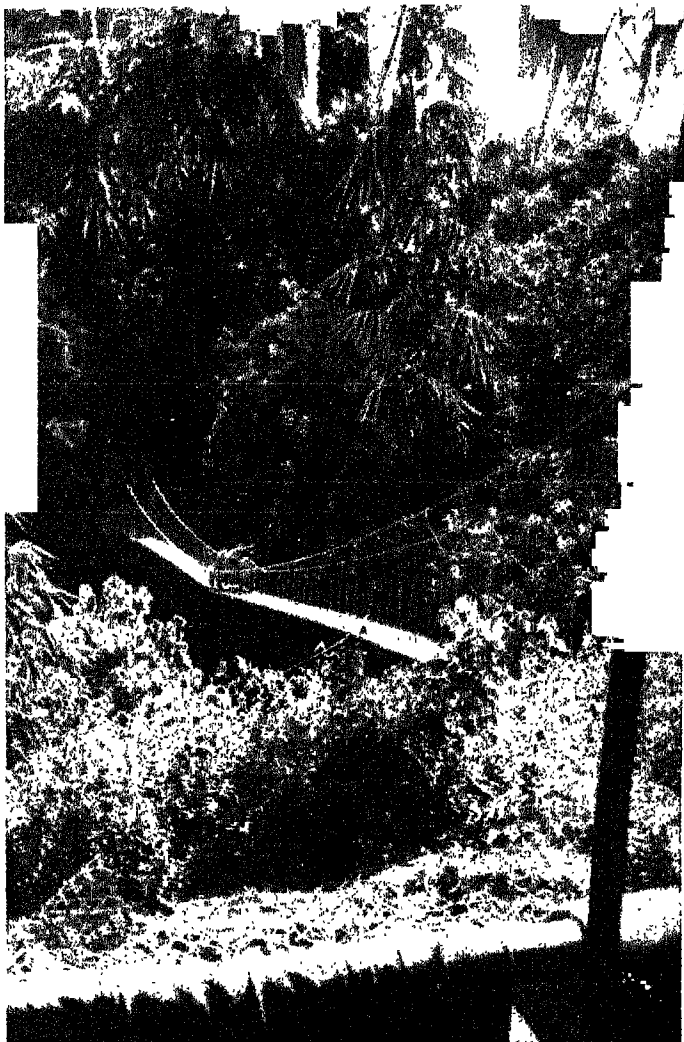
. . .

What could we do? I promised him a rough ride, but we might make it. James had come up on his way to take over at Jirighat from Bannister, who subsequently went to hospital in Silchar with bad jungle sores. With James had come that great driver, Strand of the L.A.D. Strand is a huge fellow—one feels that if the Jeep won't carry him, he will carry the Jeep. Campbell says that Strand's trouble is that he is too brave. He just doesn't know fear and will drive anywhere. I think Campbell is wise in his judgement. Strand is all that.

3 . .

I had a conference with James and Strand. I told them that they had to get this important man through if it was possible. James and Strand looked at each other, and I knew it was all right. James is a determined fellow, and Strand is Strand. I told them not to take any unnecessary risks, but this civilian had to be pushed through even if he finished up on his feet.

Sure enough, he did finish on his feet. The urgency of his job spurred him on by foot, when James and Strand were wedging the Jeep across



-WEDGED THE JEEP ACROSS'



## THE LAMPI

the Makru to enter the last stretch. I hope that most important man never knows that they didn't drive the Jeep on to overtake him just for courtesy reasons! He had walked so far, and they would only have caught him a mile short of Jirighat—so it wouldn't have been fair!!

. . .

But, by gad, those two did it. On the afternoon of 17th September, they broke through. I knew they would. I knew Strand would drive anywhere, and I knew James well enough. He would never say anything but "go on."

. . .

17 Sept. FROM COMMANDING OFFICER TO ADJUTANT. ENCODED. IMPORTANT. TELL GENERAL ROUGH RIDE BUT FIRST JEEP THROUGH TO JIRIGHAT SEVENTEENTH.

18 Sept. FROM ADJUTANT TO COMMANDING OFFICER. ENCODED. IMPORTANT. PERSONAL SAVORY TO CHAPMAN. WELL DONE CHAPFORCE.

. . .

A wire from the General for the evening conference. Well done!!

. . .

We've done it! Not the 21st, but the 17th. The first Jeep has gone right through. Good old

## THE LAMPI

James and Strand. What a pair. We've done it! To hell with the doubting Thomases and with the moaners and the "Chapman's folly-ites." We've done it and we're through. Good old Royal Artillery!

. . .

There had been many doubting Thomases. All sorts of them: detractors too. But not on the Road.

"Chapman's Folly" was the common name for the road. There were many quips—"Do you know the latest about Chapforce. They are giving up their guns and getting picks and shovels instead. Their badge is to be a wheelbarrow rampant," another—"Do you hear that the Chapforce road is going so quickly that they can't stop it and now they have hit the Indian Ocean, so Chapman is looking round for a new Moses." All in good part. That was one group.

Another group was different. "I don't know what all the fuss is about. Of course they can make a road for Jeeps—I happen to know it was a second-class road before they started. It's too easy." This was because some misguided periodical published a map shewing the bridle track as a second-class road! I wish the producer of the map and his supporters had travelled in our Jeeps day in and day out on the 'second-class road!' Of course the job was 'too easy': when it had been accomplished.



THE SECOND CLASS ROAD



THE DRY SEASON BUS ROUTE

## THE LAMPI

But the one which gave us the most joy was the 'bus—yes, the 'bus. It lay derelict in Imphal and carried a destination board LAKHIPUR—SILCHAR.

"Ah," said the clever ones, "that proves it. There must have been a road because here is a bus which clearly runs to Silchar." To embroider it—"In the dry season there is a 'bus route from Imphal to Silchar, and all Chapforce is doing is to maintain the Road."

That was the best of all. Away to the west, beyond our Road altogether, there runs a 'bus service LAKHIPUR to SILCHAR and back—a distance of fifteen milcs. The 'bus in Imphal had been on that route, but was commandeered and brought round to Imphal by the Dimapur Road, to shift refugees. And there it lay, seized upon as a proof! How we laughed at that one.

But of all the people who insisted that there was a road all the time, not a single one came out to see for himself. Which is strange, because it is lovely motoring in this beautiful country.

. . .

There is no anti-climax. Coming along behind, slowly, steadily but surely are the road building tortoises. Here they come. Railing, widening, cambering, timbering. Not for them the thrill of bursting through new miles. Theirs the task of making safe, making sure. The road's not for us to ride on, but for strangers.

## *THE LAMPI*

'Make it safe, make it wide and level. Push on, push on.'

. . .

On 21st September, the General came. He had long promised to visit us, but had never been able to manage it—not surprising, in view of his responsibilities. From the first to last he had taken my word. I told him the road was progressing, of our difficulties, of our successes, and that it was going forward. His words of encouragement and his complete trust I managed to convey to the men. He couldn't come himself, but he didn't send anybody else to report to him. He trusted us implicitly, and we liked him for it.

. . .

But on 21st September, he came. He brought the Political Agent from Imphal and also the President of the Durbar. It was a thank-you trip—to meet the Naga headman and say thank you. I had a sneaking feeling the P.A. and President came to find out if their beloved Nagas were happy at having had the soldiers among them! But that's an injustice. They came to help in the good work of the road, and to see what the Road was, and if it would help their difficult job.

. . .

## THE LAMPI

What a disaster that trip was from a weather point of view. It just rained the whole of the two days. Newly-made roads were slushy and skiddy. A dozen times I bewailed that the General should see it like that, but he wouldn't have it. He would rather see what we had done under the worst conditions than the best. He was delighted with what he saw, enthusiastic and helpful. To every soldier on the road he spoke—and at Lagairong, on the night of 21st September, to all the soldiers there:—

“Everybody said it was impossible, but Chapforce has done it and done it well. Well done, all of you. Hurry up and finish the job. I have told your Colonel to put up a stone slab to say that you have done the impossible. Thank you.”

. . .

What excitement for the headmen and the Nagas! The General Sahib himself was coming, and the P.A. too. ‘It can’t be true.’ And the President of the Durbar. ‘No, the interpreters are lying; it can’t be.’ ‘But the Colonel Sahib said so, so it must be right.’ ‘And he told every headman to come, too.’ ‘We had better be there, it must be true.’ “Wow,” “Katti,” their favourite expressions of surprise were repeated and repeated. “Wow, the General Sahib himself.”

. . .

## THE LAMPI

And the General Sahib came. First to Tairenpokpi, where he drank a mouthful of Ju, and then another for courtesy's sake. And said "thank you, all of you," and gave out salt, and a rupee here and there to the few chapangs who came with their father headmen.

He came to M.s. 36., too. There a goat was killed in his honour, but mercifully the rain saved him from another Ju mouthful. More thanks, more compliments. The interpreter, our one and only "Henry", told me that they quarrelled—"The General Sahib spoke to me more than to you." Of course, he didn't speak to any of them, but only at them through the interpreter. But each wife back in the villages still believes that her husband was in personal conference with his personal friend the General Sahib, who thanked him personally for his war work!

. . .

To digress for a moment. Henry, the interpreter. He joined us early in July, the 4th, to be exact. He reported for duty in a cap—a cap of the type sacred to a very famous golfer. And from that moment, he was Henry. A nice little Kuki man, who had served for years in the Assam Rifles, had been a schoolmaster, and had also worked on the Dimapur Road. A grand little man, game for anything. Henry was with me most of the time, was known as





THE GENERAL WENT TO LACAIRONG

## THE LAMPI

'the Colonel Sahib's interpreter,' and rather feared by the other interpreters. But he could work on the road too, and did. And he polished off the quibblers at the evening Durbars without even referring to me. I hope the State rewards him, when the soldiers have gone, by giving him permanent employment. He deserves it, but he would rather have a gun—his life's hope.

He'll get it if I can influence it.

. . .

Still further went the General to Lagairong. He saw my Khopum Valley, and looked and looked and looked. He saw nothing sinister in it, I'm sure. It looked wonderful, in spite of the rain. And "what a wonderful aerodrome it would make" was his comment. So it would—its  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles would serve the R.A.F. wonderfully—or the Fleet Air Arm if it were flooded, as it could be.

. . .

What a gathering of headmen there was to meet the visitors. Nine headmen, all to talk to the P.A. about their troubles or their work. All to be thanked by the General. They brought an ox as a gift, which was thereupon killed: at which stage the General made Valley history by giving them the magnificent present of a whole bag of salt. How the news of that travelled up and down the hills. 'What a Sahib.

## THE LAMPL

No niggling handfuls of salt from him. What a gesture. How rich he must be. Just handed it over as if it was nothing. Yes, a whole bag. Just like that. Help yourselves, he told us. It's all yours. What a man. We will do another week's work for that.'

. . .

Our guests were very kind. They realised how disappointed we were about the rain, but they did say that it didn't matter and that the road was good. The General said he hadn't expected anything so good.

. . .

Yes, they were very kind. We gave them fresh river fish for dinner, and they knew we hadn't had time to go fishing. They all knew what half a stick of gelignite would do in a deep river, but they didn't press the point too much.

As an aside, I have fished all my life—a dry fly enthusiast. But war knows no rules, and fresh fish keeps soldiers healthy. It isn't sport, dynamiting a river, but it's a good practice. Fresh fish certainly keeps the men going.

. . .

Yes, our guests were very courteous. Even at breakfast on the 22nd when they sprinkled their porridge with a liberal amount of coarse





I TOOK THE IAKIN BACK TO M ~ 56

## THE LAMPI

salt, which looked like sugar, they still said nothing! Somebody asked if we had a Scots cook, but even that didn't really mean anything! And in order to get rid of the taste of salt they dived deeply into that part of their porridge they had sprinkled heavily with "sugar"! Yes, they were most courteous, but it spoiled their breakfasts!

. . .

I took the party back to M.s. 36. and there said good-bye. I had to get back to my work at Nungba, and the General was quite agreeable to being driven the rest of the way by one of the drivers. Probably he was relieved! I know the Road too well now to be a comfortable driver for those who don't!

. . .

So back I went, and spent the night at Lagairong. The great visit was over. And now, how was the road going? Reports came tumbling in one after the other. Rain at M.s. 95., rain at Oinamlong, cloud bursts at Nungba, and the rest I knew for myself. What a tragedy. The General had told me to expect 300 Jeeps and the first troops down the road on 30th September. Nine days to turn a Jeep track into a Road, and it had lashed with rain for days. The road was slimy, greasy,

## THE LAMPI

dangerous. The coolies wouldn't turn out until the rain stopped. I was past worrying. That night I thought of England—the West End, fishing in Scotland, anything except that damned road. I just couldn't. It was too much. I went out into the night and a sickly moon was shining through the rain clouds on to the Valley.

"Damn you, you placid beast—you started all this, didn't you? Good night, you blighter. Good night, Valley."

. . .

I knew something was going to happen. The 23rd September was a rainy dawn, and as I shaved I had a feeling it was the date of something or other, and then I remembered.

Two years ago on 23rd September I took command of my Regiment. Two years which were like two weeks and two centuries. I had never been anything else but the C.O.—and yet yesterday almost I was the Second in Command.

At breakfast I reminded Sergeant Maskell. He has been with me just on three years. He it was who, unknown to me, carried the new portable wireless set and all my silk underclothing to Dunkirk. On the beach I asked him, in no uncertain terms, why? "Oh, I knew you would want a change so I thought





"THE FIRST HAIRPIN BEND IN A DISCREET BOTTOM GEAR"

## THE LAMPI

I'd better bring them, and any way why should that so-and-so have the new wireless." It was only a twenty mile march, everybody dying on his feet with fatigue, and Maskell had his own kit and rifle and ammunition. That's Maskell. Honest, trustworthy Maskell, known throughout the Regiment. The friend of the newly-joined subaltern; and the best of Mess Sergeants. He allows me certain small privileges, but not too many.

Well, I told Maskell it was two years. He was unimpressed. He reminded me that it was three years since "he had taken me over"—a far more important event than the mere taking command of a Regiment.

I was still sure something was going to happen.

. . .

It did! We left Lagairong for Nungba in the early morning and found a Jeep waiting for us on the other side of the River at M.s. 51.

The road was horrible. Running with liquid mud, treacherous and foul. All went well though, and we came over the hill to descend to M.s. 59.

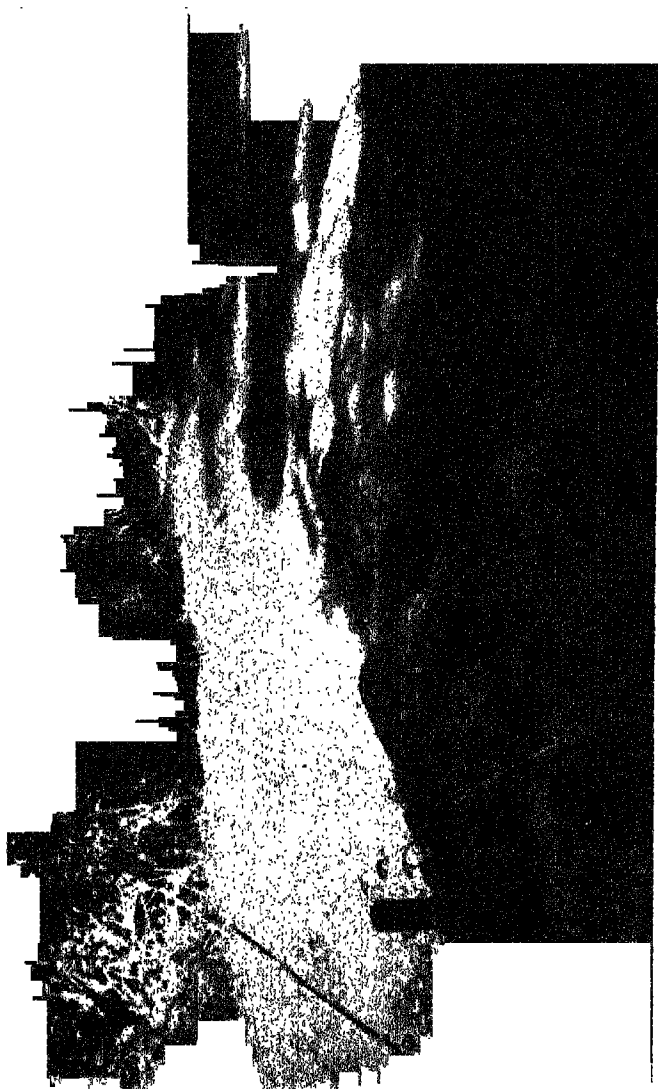
We approached the first hairpin bend, rather a shocker, in a discreet bottom gear and rounded it nicely; Maskell sitting beside me and Driver Walls in the back.

## THE LAMPI

As we got round I gently pressed the foot brake in order to stop, do a reverse, and get squarely on the road again when, horror of all horrors, the wheels wouldn't grip on the slime and we went straight for the khud! Slowly at first, but gathering momentum as we went. I roared to them to jump and saw Maskell, from the corner of my eye, get on to his feet.

Then the front wheels were over, the sump bumped on the edge, and with a crash she was over. How, I don't know, but as she went I threw myself out and finished with a blow in the back from the passing Jeep, but with my body on the road and legs over the edge. There was a horrible silence, broken only by the noise of the Jeep crashing down below. Then a quick look. There's Walls all right, standing on the road, but where's Maskell? Peering over the khud, I saw him. He was some twenty feet down, hanging on to a big bamboo which he had grabbed as the Jeep rushed down the khud, and which had pulled him out! His rifle across the seat had prevented him from jumping out. If Maskell lives to be a hundred he will never have a narrower escape from death—and he's had a few escapes already to my knowledge.

Well, there it was. Our Jeep down the khud and six miles to walk—and of course a miracle happened. They always do on the Road. In the distance the noise of a Jeep, and



"WE WENT STRAIGHT FOR THE KHUJ"



"AND SHE WAS OVER"

## THE LAMPI

lo and behold Driver Roberts appeared on his way to Lagairong.

We were soon back in Nungba. But I have never driven so slowly.

. . .

The joke of the whole thing was that the ubiquitous Sergeant Curtis arrived next day with helpers, block and tackle, and all the tools of his trade to rescue the Jeep. Rescue it they did in record time, and started off for Nungba. They hadn't gone twenty yards when it skidded again, and over the khud it dived. Curtis went down with it and also Lean Keu Vung, one of the *interpreters*. The latter was rather badly bruised. Curtis, who knows the technique after being over before—"I rolled up in a ball, sir, and was thrown out at the first bounce."

. . .

He got the Jeep out the following day all right, did the necessary repairs on the roadside, and that was that.

He went on his way to Bishenpur, and the Jeep went about its normal occasions.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Seven days to go before the road is open to moving troops. Can it possibly be done? Mathematically it is impossible; a Jeep track yes, it already exists; but a finished road, no. On the night of 23rd September there remained nineteen miles of track to be converted, in areas where the total number of soldiers on the Road was thirty-three. Could thirty-three men do roughly one thousand yards each in a week? Some of them, perhaps, on the easy stretches, but there were heavy snags ahead. Not Lousy Lizzies, but rock fields and narrowed track; a few awkward bridges and a collapsed causeway.

. . .

Whom can we bring forward to help? Young and his team at Lagairong are the only answer, therefore he is told to close his work in four days and advance to M.s. 59., to work from there up to M.s. 61, and down to M.s. 56. One gap closed up.

. . .

What else can be done? Recruit more coolies. North and south went the interpreters with the message that one more week's work would finish the "Lampi". That the Colonel

## THE LAMPI

Sahib was calling them to help in this last effort. Would they come? They did. From all the affected areas came reports: 'thirty men arrived today, ten men are coming tomorrow', and so on. Old soldiers from the last war turned up leading in their friends. They produced certificates saying that they had served in France, and were exempt from the Hut Tax for life—but they were willing to help on the "Lampi". Nagas and Kukis alike came in.

. . .

As we had moved along the road a lot of Kukis did come in from the south to help us.

Kukis are fine chaps. They profess to look down on the Nagas, whom they consider to be ignorant. Certainly many Kukis, but few Nagas, can speak English—in fact, without exception our interpreters were Kukis.

A high percentage of the Assam Rifles are Kukis, and they make first-class soldiers.

In the old days the Kukis ranged the hills, taking what they wished from whom they liked, whilst the Nagas stayed in their mountain villages. Thus the Kuki became a martial, aggressive type, as opposed to the Nagas' domestic and passive nature.

Large numbers of Kukis served in France during the last war. One grand old chief, Nungkhogin of Suangsang, who came to help

## THE LAMPI

us has credentials from the highest in the land for his work in France, his loyalty and his ability as a headman. He looks after a very large area.

. . .

Whilst he was with us he was very dignified and his departure was marked by much ceremony. He appeared at evening Durbar with the usual bottle of Ju, and then made a speech in which he said that he had to go as his other duties called, but he would try to get back again to help. He was leaving his son behind to go on working, to shew that he wished to help as much as he could.

Then with a salaam he swept off his cloak and said that was for me, with many high compliments. It was all very confusing. I did not know whether to accept it and so deprive him, or to risk hurting his feelings by refusing it.

I decided to keep it overnight and return it in the morning—in fact I even hoped it would rain so that I could use the excuse to hand back the cloak. But no, it was fine. He resolutely refused to admit he might be cold on the way home. I was reduced to giving him a small present “for his daughter at home,” and for himself I handed over a partitioned ration box. Four compartments—salt, rice, tea, dahl. He was delighted.



"A DREADFULLY UNHEALTHY PART"



"CLIMATIC CONDITIONS WERE TOO MUCH"

## THE LAMPI

We parted very firm friends, and I shall treasure that cloak.

. . .

But in the west dismal things were happening. First Bannister went into hospital with jungle sores, followed quickly by Veness, Derbyshire and, worst of all, Sergeant Carberry. Four out of a party of ten. They were working in a dreadfully unhealthy part, and it was taking a heavy toll. The strain of the work and the climatic conditions were proving too much. Would they hold out? Have we a man who can blast, to replace Carberry? 'No, we haven't, they must just stick it and we will send somebody to blast later on.' A poor compromise, but the only alternative to stopping altogether.

. . .

On the road miracles always happen, and did again. Unbelievable as it may be, on September 26th it stopped raining. In nine weeks we had experienced exactly eight days without rain at all, and never thought to see even one more day like it. Yet on September 26th it didn't rain at all.

. . .

The reports that night were wonderful. Record progress, large numbers of coolies, and

## THE LAMPI

general optimism. Surely we aren't going to manage it after all. Touch wood and all that, but if we can only have another four days like this we shall get away with it. The sunset that night was warranty for another fine day. Blood-red—the Shepherd's Delight, of course. it must be!

. . .

It didn't rain on 27th September. Sections tumbled over each other to send in success reports that night. Even the dour Young admitted that things weren't so bad. Monosyllabic to a degree, when I pressed him for a forecast, when I urged him to say how soon he could finish—and could it be 30th September—he said, "May be, sir." That's all I could get. I put down the receiver and sighed to myself. "May be,"—it so clearly represented the whole thing.

We were tired. If only we had another month to make a job of it. We hadn't a month, we had three days, and if it rained we were done. Three days—thirty-three working hours, and on a recasting of the work we had fourteen miles to do.

. . .

The Nagas knew we had gone mad! We added  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours to the working day to make the few extra yards in each section. Then they knew we had the fever badly! Those kindly

## THE LAMPI

men, the soldier Sahibs, started shouting at them. "Get on. Work, work." And work they did. At the evening pay-out they were told—"The Road must be finished in three more days. Then every man may go home and rest."

"But the Road must be finished first. Everybody will rest then. Let the Headmen urge their villagers on. This is no place for weak men. Any man who feels he is weak may go home tonight and help the women with the harvest." For pride's sake, they all stayed and worked and worked. The Road leaped forward then.

. . .

There came a man, white-headed and bent. A Kuki, he wore Medal Ribbons from the last war. His son was a soldier in this war, and sent the old man an allowance. "Sahib, I am an old man, but I come here to work. I come to work, Sahib, because the Sirkar has helped me all my life and I love the Sirkar. I want no reward nor pay, but I bring with me thirty men. Pay them Sahib, so that they may go home with money to shew. For myself, give me work on the road and I will do it until I drop. I know no better way for me to end my days than working for my Protector."

He meant it. He was loyal. A living example of the result of fair treatment and

## THE LAMPI

consideration. A loyalty to the Sirkar, which is to England, beyond any description.

What an example to those who benefit from living in England and who share its freedom, yet shirk when the time arrives to defend that freedom!

The 28th was a beautiful day. Cloudless from morning to night. What a day's work was put in. Shading the map with progress that night was a lengthy business. Obstacles? They didn't exist. A few bad patches, perhaps, but a couple of blasts tomorrow and twenty men levelling, and the job's done. The men? Oh, plenty of them. Rolling up all day. If only we had more tools it would be easy. 'More tools, in faith—where from? Use your hands, and get on. You have two more days, and two more only.'

That night there was a heavy mist laden with dew, and we knew the run of luck had gone. Tomorrow would be wet again. I spent the night at Lagairong, and communed with my old friend, the Valley. At 10 o'clock that night the Valley was three quarters full of white mist and the moon, sailing in a clear sky, was shining on it. The beauty of the night made me forget the threat of rain. It was ethereal and mysterious. Silent as a grave and glimmering like a sheet of silver. How beautiful it was.



DISCOVER THINGS WITH IT UPON

Now — the time to let it go with it — and it will be



## THE LAMPI

How typical of the Valley to offer its beauty even at night, yet full of threat for the morning.

Bowling along the floor of the Valley at 7 o'clock on the morning of 29th September, I sang "Over the Hills to Skye." Fortunately, I was by myself! The day was fine—crystal clear and the sun was up. 'Rain? Never heard of it. It doesn't exist.' We shall do the job, of course. It was never in doubt. We just got morbid after all the rain, and we were tired. That's what it was. Today the chaps will do at least three miles, and the same again tomorrow; then all that is needed is a week's tidying up and just opening some of those hairpin bends.

Even Lousy Lizzie is finished. And if she is finished, well—that's the end.

That night: "Record progress today. Road now finished to river." Again, "Further lot of coolies arrived. Should appreciate more tools. Expect to clear whole job in two days." And on the road going home: "Everything went well today, sir." "How do you like the bridge at 56?" "Yes, we made nearly 700 yards today, complete with railing." And, "the coolies seem to know what we want. They worked tremendously hard today. Have you any Quinine up there, sir. So-and-so isn't very well. Oh, we made 500 yards today."

And so on.

. . .

## THE LAMPI

That night, on the sunning-up, it seemed to me that we had won. Incredibly, we had won! The road was not perfect, but it seemed that we could accept through traffic without fear of disaster. We hadn't finished in all sections, certainly, but we had a road of sorts right through, and before the heavy traffic could reach the gap in the real road, it would be filled in. In a word, we had the job in hand. Tomorrow was Zero day, for we had been warned to expect the first of the movements then. But we didn't care. For the first night since the Road started, I had no evening conference of the workers. There was no need. They knew precisely what was wanted, and they would be out after it tomorrow, 30th September, and hammer away until they got it!

. . . .

Going to sleep that night, I realised how long we had been away from our guns, and how grateful we should be to those chaps who filled our operational role in the Batteries, with reduced detachments, so that men could be spared for the Road. We shall soon be trooping back again to Headquarters and the Batteries; perhaps, who knows, to get our chance against the enemy.

May that happen too—





THE FYKIT WHICH IS THE RESI HOUSE IN NINGRA

## CHAPTER IX.

I am sitting up in the cyrie which is the Rest House in Nungba, and it is September 30th. I know that away in the west the first reconnaissance party of the soldiers who are to use the road has left. I know that just to the east the road builders are moving slowly up to join here at Nungba with the made road—in fine, that when they have done only a mile or so more of converting Jeep track into road, our great work is over. They will do it before the soldiers arrive.

Already we have sent a party through from Bishenpur to Silchar in one day—a distance of 109 miles. They can be in Calcutta next day, a contrast with the Dimapur Road method—anything from four to ten days!

. . . .

Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz—four notes on the buzzer is a call for me. A voice down the telephone; “No. 2 Jeep has left the River, sir.” “Right.” I must cut out that drill now; it has become redundant. It is a relic from the early days when a Jeep left its station. We knew when to expect it, and when it was half-an-hour overdue the search party went out—ostensibly to help if it had stuck in the mud or with engine

## THE LAMPI

trouble; we all knew within ourselves that they really went along the khud edge to see if the wheel tracks went over anywhere. One never knew then, but it's a needless precaution now.

. . .

As I sit I hear the noise of Jeep engines—soon to be heavier metal. They pass backwards and forwards, confidently and speedily. Off to the right is a Road Sign "Village of Nungba. Maximum Speed 5 m.p.h. Look out for Children." Surely a sign of success?

The Nagas think the sign means Nungba is a very important place, distinguished above all others for their work on the "Lampi". I am quite certain that at my table one of these nights will appear several headmen from roadside villages to ask if they also may have a "Sertifficaat" on wood, with many fine colours, to say that they also are good workers. They will get it! After all "Hairpin Bend Round Next Corner" means just as much to them, and it's little or no trouble to us! Then they too will be distinguished!

. . .

Tomorrow I go along the road to the west to take a look at the work, and to spend the night in Silchar. Silchar, that Mecca in our thoughts for eleven weeks. 'Push on to Silchar. We've got to make it.' And now it's over.



"THE 'SERTIFFICAAT' ON WOOD"



## THE LAMPI

Soon I shall be calling the soldiers home. As they come in, they will finish off the hairpin bends, put right this thing and that left behind in the rush, and slowly return to the Regiment.

. . .

The valleys and the hills will settle down again. Their sides no longer will be tortured by blasting and digging. The trees awaiting their turn for the axe will know they are spared. And right through them runs the Road to which they will get accustomed. The noise of engines will be with them until the soldiers go away for ever. Perhaps, then, it would be kinder to let the Road die quietly and gently with the years. It would be horrible to think of popular tours down the valleys. Monstrous to think of the Nagas being "featured."

. . .

To the men who did the work, I think no words can pay sufficient tribute. In the west they have been going down with fever and jungle sores. All along the road I see tense, sunburnt faces, most of them much thinner, but through the sunburn a cheery grin. "Good morning, sir. We did two hundred yards yesterday." What about the officer who bounces? I send him in to Imphal, obviously full of fever—and straight away he bounces back—"I want to see the finish, sir." What

## THE LAMPI

can one do except be grateful that one has chaps like that.

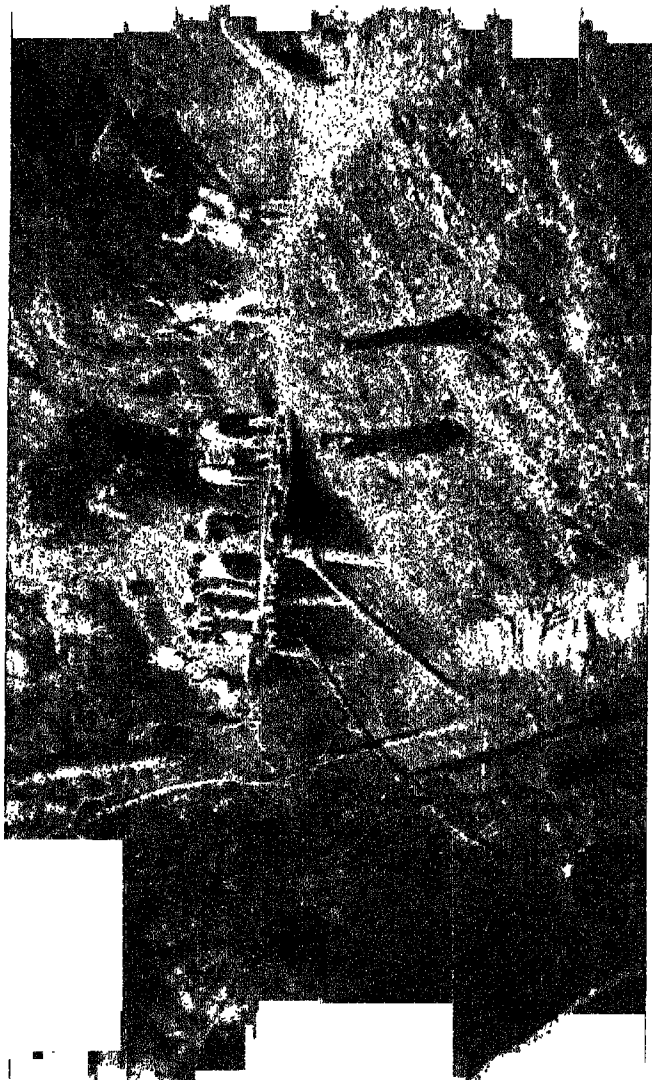
They are all like that. Yesterday a wondering visitor asked why the Royal Artillery had taken on what obviously was an Engineers' job. I don't know why. The Engineers are too busy on other things, and according to all the rules it was impossible: the rules are right usually. I feel it was because we didn't realise how difficult it was going to be that we said we could do it. But of course I knew I had the chaps who would do it. Anti-Tank gunners are not Civil Engineers, but, as the C.R.E. said, "It's only a matter of common sense and getting on with it," and he's right. But I should like to claim that my chaps would do it any way!

. . .

The C.R.E. came out yesterday to see what we had done. He has helped by seeing that we got what we asked for, and he came to see the result. He was very kind and pronounced it good, although he must have winced at some of our cruder engineering jobs! But they carry the Road, and have been tested severely.

. . .

Nungba sits high up in a saucer of higher hills. Off to the right, on a 5000 foot hill, the Nagas tell me the 'Humpis' live. They are tigers, and I am going to shoot one some fine



"SOME OF OUR CRUDER ENGINEERING JOBS."



"—MADE THE C. R. E. WINCE"

## *THE LAMP*

day. Down below is the River, the Irang, teeming with fish. I am going to catch a few one day. Away to the south, blue in the distance, are hills our enemy also can see. To the left a high range, guarding, from the west, the one and only Valley. Suitably, high up on the range is a mediæval castle. Not really, but a sandstone formation with turrets and battlements. All put there to guard the Valley from intruders!

. . .

And the Valley? On my way back, when all the soldiers have gone home, I shall spend a day and a night at Lagairong. I must have time to look at the Valley. I shan't see it again until the war is long over, and the memory I take with me must be complete—as ever a memory could be of such a place.

Good-bye, Valley. You started all this, and now it's done. I've hated you many times, and come back to you. You menace.

Good-bye, friend. I will see you again as soon as I can.

Good-bye, Khopum Valley.

## *THE END*

## EPILOGUE.

The hairpin bends have been opened right up to 45 feet diameter. The suspension bridges have been strengthened and widened. Plans are in hand for hundreds of tons of stores weekly to go along the Road, carried by hundreds of Jeeps; soldiers, soldiers and more soldiers.

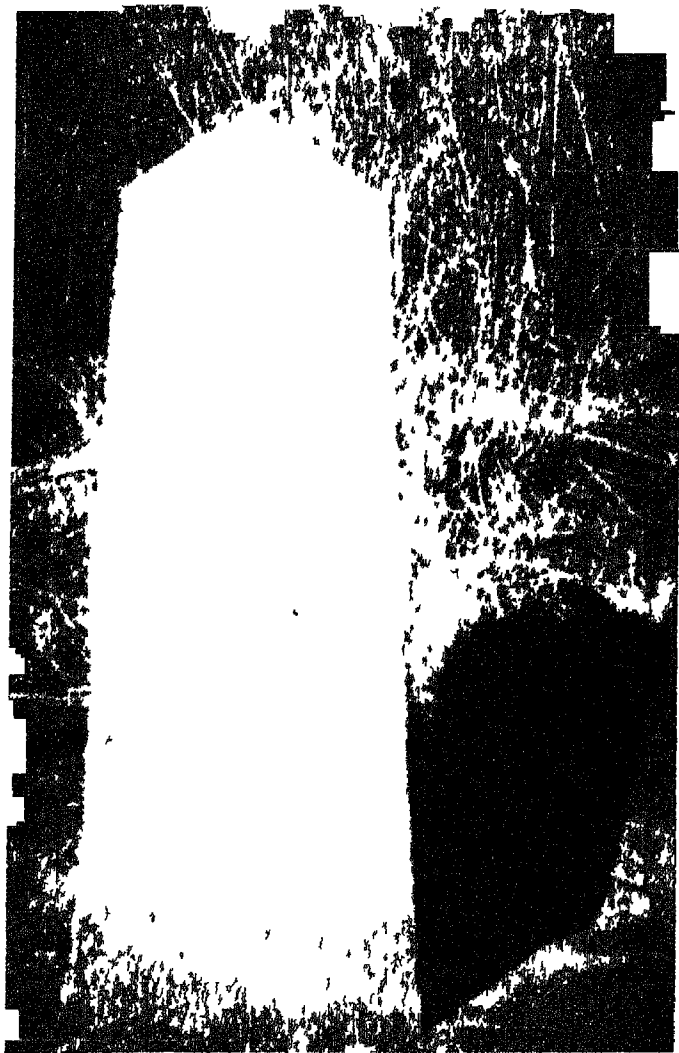
The Nagas have gone home. They have a pocket full of rupees and are rich for the first time in their lives. Now they may rest, or gather the harvest.

Somehow I think they liked the excitement of the "Lampi". I think they will miss the Soldier Sahibs who told them how to build it. That they have gone home with an enhanced opinion of the English Sahib is beyond doubt—the soldiers were an example beyond all praise.



THIS ROAD  
FROM  
BISHENPUR TO LAKHIPUR  
A DISTANCE OF 109 MILES  
WAS BUILT BETWEEN THE DATES  
19TH JULY AND 21ST SEPT., 1942  
BY  
CHAPFORCE  
Because everybody who knew  
said that it was  
Impossible.





THE END OF THE ROAD



## GLOSSARY.

Lampi.	Road.
Khud.	Precipice, steep drop.
Chapangs.	Naga children.
Nagas.	A hill tribe, formerly Head Hunters.
Kukis.	Another hill tribe, more nomadic than the Nagas.
Sirkar.	White Rule.
Ju.	Rice beer.
Durbar.	Council, palaver.
Humpi.	Tiger.
Dahl.	Lentils.
Corps.	Military formation one higher than a Division.
B.G.S.	Brigadier, General Staff.
C.R.E.	Commander, Royal Engineers ; senior Engineer officer of a Division.
R H.Q.	Regimental Head Quarters.
Div. H.Q.	Divisional Head Quarters.
The General.	Major General R.A. Savory, D.S.O., M.C.
The C.R.E.	Lieut. Colonel N.E.V. Patterson, O.B.E., R.E.
The M.O.	Lieut. D.G. Wright, R.A.M.C.
The Political Agent.	C. Gimson, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S.
President of the Durbar.	T. A. Sharpe, Esq.
B.O.R.	British Soldier (British Other Ranks).
M.S.	Milestone.
Rest House	Bungalow built and owned by Government, for use of travellers.

# THE MEN WHO HELPED TO BUILD THE ROAD.

## I.

### OFFICERS AND MEN WHO ACTUALLY WORKED ON THE ROAD.

#### *Full Time.*

Major J. A. Campbell, R.A.	Gnr. Fry, G.
Lieut. P. S. James, R.A.	Gnr. Bell, J.
2/Lieut. J. H. West, R.A.	Gnr. Twist, J.
2/Lieut. R. L. Brown, R.A.	Gnr. Brook, H.
2/Lieut. A. Young, R.A.	Gnr. Lowther, J.
R. S. M. Thomas, G.	Gnr. Stobart, D.
Sgt. Watson, P.	Dvr. Stubbington, E.
Sgt. Carberry, F.	Dvr. Barnes, F.
Sgt. Martin, E.	Dvr. Braggington, A.
Sgt. Espey, J.	Gnr. Houldernesse, W.
L/Sgt. Johnson, R.	Dvr. Mather, F.
I./Sgt. Botha, F.	Dvr. Moody, E.
L/Sgt. Marner, T.	Gnr. Watkins, L.
L/Sgt. Akers, S.	Dvr. Wheeler, G.
Bdr. Blevins, J.	Gnr. Buxton, M.
Bdr. Thirkle, H.	Dvr. Heath, G.
Bdr. Boyle, F.	Dvr. Vinson, T.
Bdr. Tompkinson, G.	Dvr. Baldwin, V.
L/Bdr. Morge, W.	Dvr. Smith, H.
L/Bdr. Prince, H.	Dvr. Veness, F.
L/Bdr. Langton, J.	Dvr. Johnson, S.
L/Bdr. Wiltshire, F.	Sigmn. Naylor, V.
L/Bdr. Jenkins, M.	Dvr. Gilmore, G.
L/Bdr. Slade, S.	Sigmn. Mycock, C.
Gnr. Tree, D.	Gnr. Lewis, R.

## THE LAMPI

### *Part Time.*

Lieut. R. W. Rogers, R.C.S.	Gnr. Hallett, J.
Lieut. M. E. Mossman, R.A.	Gnr. Stirling, E.
2/Lieut. R. Bannister, R.A.	Dvr. Lintott, E.
Sgt. Greenfield, F.	Gnr. Youd, M.
Sgt. O'Riordan, M.	Gnr. Hughes, B.
Sgt. Ayling, A.	Gnr. Ryall, D.
Bdr. Laxton, E.	Gnr. Darbyshire, W.
L/Bdr. Steer, H.	Gnr. Fox, A.
Gnr. Jackson, G.	Dvr. Goodwill, S.
Gnr. Cross, A.	Gnr. Walden, C.
Gnr. Mayes, A.	Sigmn. Poole, A.
Gnr. Huckell, A.	Sigmn. Scample, L.
Dvr. White, S.	Sigmn. Willis, A.
Gnr. King, G.	Gnr. Hobbs, C.

### II.

#### OFFICERS AND MEN ENGAGED IN ADMINISTRATIVE WORK FOR THE ROAD.

### *Full Time.*

Sgt. Randall, R.	Ctn. Greig, J.
L/Sgt. Curtis, K.	Cfn. Macmillan, J.
L/Sgt. Maskell, J.	Cfn. Parker, C.
Cpl. Foxwell, D.	Ctn. Paver, A.
L/Bdr. Geare, M.	Cfn. Purkis, F.
L/Cpl. Selkirk, G.	Cfn. Short, E.
L/Bdr. Otten, S.	Sigmn. Bickerstaffe, J.
L/Cpl. Thomas, F.	Dvr. Buckley, D.
L/Bdr. Shipp, E.	Sigmn. Candlish, P.
L/Bdr. Rowett, C.	Sigmn. Hiles, R.
Gnr. Shaw, R.	Sigmn. Jephcott, A.
Gnr. King, G.	Sigmn. Perry, E.
Gnr. Veasy, J.	Sigmn. Ball, W.
Gnr. Braysher, W.	Gnr. Britcher, D.
Gnr. Duxbury, A.	

## THE LANPI

### *Part Time.*

Captain (now Major) H. J. Hobden, R.A.	Sigmn. Pawley, F.
Lieut. R. W. Rogers, R.C.S.	Sigmn Webster, T.
L/Bdr. Hickey, J.	Sigmn Williams, E.
L/Cpl. Hope, J.	Sigmn. Westhead, V.
L/Cpl. Headon, A.	Sigmn. Dougherty, H.
Gnr. Clarke, W.	Sigmn. Senior, T.
Gnr. Cook, T.	Sigmn. Granger.
Signu. Roberts, W.	Sigmn. Lewis,
	L/Sgt. Hornden, W.

### JEEP DRIVERS.

#### *Full Time.*

Cpl. Pike, R.	Dvr. O'Brien, P.
Dvr. Walls, L.	Dvr/Mech. Richards, R.
Dvr. Bevan, C.	Cfn. Spirit, S.
Dvr. Roberts, H.	Cfn. Strand, J.

#### *Part Time.*

Dvr. Jacques, G.	Cfn. Spain, J.
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### BRIDGING PARTY.

B. S. M. Duke, R.	Gnr. Mallett, F.
Sgt. Parr, A.	Gnr. Jobson, E.
Sgt. Fuller, C.	Gnr. Miller, A.
Sgt. Bithell, F.	Gnr. Minett, A.
Sgt. Hopkins, E.	Gnr. Smith, R.
Sgt. Daughtrey, E.	Gnr. Smith, W.

(This party worked on the Road for a fortnight, by themselves, on a particular job involving the construction of four bridges.)

## APPENDIX A

This announcement was sent in to Divisional Head Quarters to advise that the road was through the Khopum Valley to LAGAIRONG.

### TRADE ANNOUNCEMENT.

CHAPFORCE AND COMPANY, LIMITED.

*General Engineering Contractors.*

IMPHAL.

Phone :—M.T.X.O.      Telegrams :—ITMUSBEDUN.

#### *Road Department.*

Roads Built, Bridges Built, Rest and Road Houses Designed and Erected (with E.L., Hot and Cold Water), Tunnels Constructed, Your own Bridges altered (with or without permission).

#### *Engineering Department.*

Jeeps salvaged, re-designed and repaired, Hydro-Electric plants installed.

Our Departmental Motto:—"If It Has Wheels It Will Go."

#### *Catering Department.*

Fresh Eggs	}	Daily.	Fresh Fish	{	Twice
Fresh Mealies			Weekly.		
Vegetables					

Bacon	}	To Order
Ham		
Biltong		

All Home Cured.

## THE LAMPI

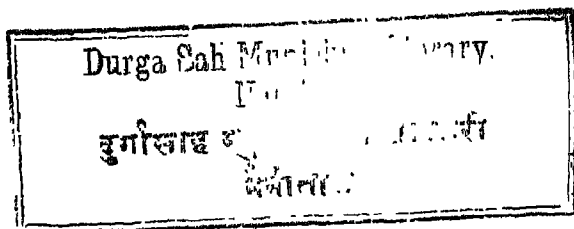
### *Hotel Department.*

Some of our establishments—and what our guests say:—

IMPHAL            "A home from home." Finest wines, spirits and cigars.

TAIRENPOKPI    "A lovely mountain retreat." Only 2½ hours by Jeep from IMPHAL.

LAIGAIRONG     Opening shortly under expert management. Magnificent approach designed by us and erected by PAW CHUN LUNG, Esq., N.A.G.A.



## APPENDIX B

### *METHOD OF CONTROL ON THE ROAD.*

DAILY WAGE.	<p>Standard at Bishenpur:—</p> <p>Men—Re. 1.      Women—As. 12.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Children—As. 8.</p> <p>Elsewhere they varied and at the latter end of the work, in the more remote parts, up to Rs. 2. per man-day had to be paid.</p>
GANGS.	<p>Each B.O.R. had a gang of coolies which never exceeded 50 in number, except in the flat Khopum Valley where they were under surveillance quite easily. A larger number than 50 on the road itself proved to be cumbersome, and they slacked off round the bends.</p>
SUPERVISION.	<p>Each Section had an interpreter and one or more headmen (Headmen were paid Rs. 2/8 per diem). B.O.Rs. issued their orders through the interpreter to the headmen, who told their own villagers. It was found expedient to have villages working in competition with each other. That increased the pace of the work. Each B.O.R. issued a ticket every morning to his workers. At stopping time at night he initialled it, and this the workers presented at the pay table nightly</p>

## THE LAMPI

for his pay. This method prevented coolies from getting a ticket and then diving off into the jungle for the day. The B.O.R. was empowered to award a bonus of a few annas to first-class workers, and similarly to dock the pay of slackers. This established the B.O.R. as the man they had to please.

DURBAR.

Each night the officer commanding the section interviewed any worker who wanted to speak to him. They thus aired their views and ideas, and became associated with the success of the road.

BRITISH  
OTHER  
RANKS.

The maximum number actually controlling the road work was never greater than 42, which does not include cooks and drivers. I refer to actual workers on the road, spread over the whole distance of 109 miles. Their procedure differed according to the task in hand. Bridge-builders had roughly ten coolies. Road builders had up to fifty: Ten timber cutters, ten rock gleaners and builders, ten camberers, ten levellers, five sapling-getters and five railers. Men continued at their own tasks daily; thus became more expert. Each task was parcelled out similarly.

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